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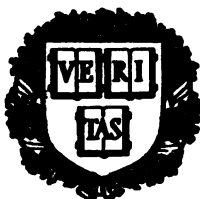
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# ESSAY

ON

# RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY.

(Edmond)  
BY M. ÉMILE SAISSET,

*Professor of the History of Philosophy in the Faculty of Letters of Paris.*

**Translated,**

WITH MARGINAL ANALYSIS, NOTES,  
CRITICAL ESSAY, AND PHILOSOPHICAL APPENDIX.

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## Advertisement.

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THE clergyman whose name was originally advertised as Translator of this book is not responsible for its opinions. He was unwilling that it should appear without larger commentaries and explanations than were admissible in a work of the sort. The translation has, however, been finished most carefully, and the public will lose nothing by the withdrawal of the original editor.

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The running analysis upon the margin, the notes enclosed between brackets, a single essay in the second volume (pages 193-228), and the Index, are the only portions which have not come from M. Saisset's pen.

The reader's particular attention is invited to the Appendix, both for his own sake and in justice to the eminent author of the *Essai de Philosophie Religieuse*.

In a critical essay in the second volume, we have ventured to speak freely, but not, we hope, disrespectfully, of some points, which we should have wished otherwise. Upon subsequent study of M. Saisset's other writings, we made the extracts given in the Appendix (and especially No. I.), that readers might judge how far our view was correct.

We would ask theological and philosophical students to read the extract No. II. with peculiar attention. It gives those passages from St. Augus-

tine which are the key to much of the *Essai de Philosophie Religieuse*, especially to M. Saisset's doctrine of time and eternity, and his much-contested theory of the relative infinity of creation. It may also serve as an introduction to the metaphysics of the Plato of the Christian Church.

M. Saisset is above all a disciple of Plato, and of him of whom it has been said, *Quicquid dicitur in Platone vivit in Augustino*. He seems to have felt that the task of his life is to conciliate Plato and Augustine, Philosophy and Christianity. As orthodox theologians we have noted details in this essay to which we object; but we cannot help thinking that it breathes a spirit and is pervaded by a method which Christian thinkers will approve. Our English theology and philosophy are in danger of degradation from current systems. A work in the spirit of St. Augustine, Descartes, and Leibnitz may serve to elevate some of those who breathe its air. May it tend "to strengthen our belief in the preambles of the Christian faith," and especially in a Personal God. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

But let it never be forgotten that this, after all, is but the porch, through which the soul passes to that holier school, of which Christ is the teacher, and His cross the central lesson, in which the truth is no longer announced in the midst of philosophical disputations, but from the oracles of God, and the clouds that encompass His Presence.

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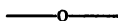
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## INTRODUCTION.



I PROPOSE to discuss in this Essay the capital problem of religious philosophy, the Personality of God. I wish to state briefly how I have been led to the consideration of this problem, what its extent is, and the circumstances which have invested it in our day with a character of peculiar interest and seriousness.

The Personality of God the chief subject of this discussion.

At a period now distant, when I thought myself entitled to emancipate myself from every species of tutelage, and to form my own philosophical and religious opinions, I found Pantheism one of the questions of the day. This was about 1840. German ideas had been spreading in France, since the publication of Madame de Stael's book. Goethe was read with enthusiasm. Historians and critics drew their inspirations from Lessing, from Herder, from Creuzer, from Niebuhr. Men of science consulted Carus and Burdach. Kant was deciphered. Listeners were found for the startling novelties of Schelling and Hegel. The masters of French philosophy were considered to be, generally speaking, extremely favourable to the movement. The chief of the eclectic school was not the only thinker who was denounced as an Hegelian.<sup>1</sup> This accusation spared neither

The Author was led to it by the circumstances of France at the period of the introduction of German literature.

<sup>1</sup> [M. Victor Cousin.]

the author of *Esquisse d'une Philosophie*,<sup>1</sup> nor the knot of former disciples of St. Simon, who at that time directed the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle*. On all sides, through the multitudinous echoes of the press, in serious books, in light pamphlets, in journals and reviews, might be heard the consecrated anathema: *Rationalism necessarily terminates in Pantheism*. More than one prelate in his charge, more than one preacher from his pulpit exclaimed, *Between Pantheism and the [Roman] Catholic faith there is no intermediate position*.

The attacks, especially of Roman Catholic controversialists, led the Author to examine the position that philosophy necessarily leads to Pantheism.

This universal invective, these violent attacks, sometimes raised as a challenge, sometimes repelled as a calumny, caused me to reflect. I was a passionate lover of philosophy, and yet felt no predilection for Pantheism. I wished to know if I was going on to Pantheism without suspecting it, and if it was really impossible to believe in God, and yet to remain a philosopher. What was I to do? I barely knew a few words of German, and was in no condition to read Hegel. I set to work upon Spinoza.

Study of Spinoza.

My first impression, when I began a connection with that remarkable person, which was to last for several years, was a respectful sympathy for his character, and a lively sentiment of the strength of his genius. I loved and admired that child of a proscribed race, that intractable pupil of the rabbis, driven from the synagogue, threatened with death, exiled, without country, without worship, without home, yet finding in the indomitable loftiness of his soul, and in the serenity of his unshackled contemplation, an asylum which was

Attractive-ness of his character.

<sup>1</sup> [Lamennais.]

inaccessible to all the blows of fate. Gentle, collected, inoffensive, suffering everything from men, and asking nothing in return, disdainful of report, indifferent to glory and to riches, sustaining existence in his garret on a piece of bread earned by polishing glasses, less man than pure intellect, he lived without passions, without trouble, and without hatred, but not without affection; for he loved liberty and philosophy, he inspired and he felt friendship, and could upon one occasion forget his timid reserve, to curse the assassins of Jean de Witt at the risk of his own life. Unquestionably there was something seductive and interesting in such a character and such a destiny. Then there was the contrast between this man of meagre frame and his vigorous thought, between the lofty and patient character and the intrepid logic which goes right onward, trampling all obstacles under foot relentlessly and without deflection. In short, the rays of light which shot out in every direction as I advanced in the *Ethica*, and disentangled myself from the complicated network of his theorems and formulæ, the luminous simplicity of his principles, the geometrical series of consequences, the unity of the whole, the beauty and harmony of the great lines of this monument reared by his genius, had struck, dazzled, and a little fascinated me. Still I was far from yielding myself to Spinoza. I said, there is some truth in this system; but I added, with a feeling of invincible repugnance, *this system is not the truth*.

I was the more distrustful of Spinoza, because I was unable to give a fixed and precise character to his doctrine. In proportion as the genius of

Fluctuation  
of his sys-  
tem.



the philosopher struck me by its firmness and consistency, his system appeared to me illogical, undecided, and perpetually fluctuating between two contrary extremes—Atheism and Mysticism.

Hence he leaves the impression, sometimes, that he is an Atheist.

When I read the first book of the *Ethica*: in presence of the God whom he conceives to be nothing but the Universal Substance—and of that *Natura Naturans* stripped of intellect and will, whose blind and indifferent activity engenders good and evil, beauty and deformity, vice and virtue, without design, without choice, without end, creating only to destroy, giving life and thought to some selected beings, merely to rend it away from them for ever, I exclaimed, "Spinoza is an Atheist; the seventeenth century was right."

Sometimes, again, that he is a Mystic.

But when I came to the last part of his book, I could not understand how an Atheist could have traced these fine theorems which Plato would not have disavowed: "The human soul thinks God, in thinking itself under the form of eternity." And elsewhere, "We feel, we experience, that we are eternal." And then, how else could I understand all that theory of the Divine love, considered as the mysterious band which enlinks all souls and unites them to their principle? Knowing that Spinoza was a man of the deepest sincerity, and delighted to see this geometer touched with so lively a sentiment of divine things, I said to myself, whatever the age of Pascal and Bossuet may have thought, Spinoza is no Atheist; Lessing had grounds for restoring him to his proper position, and Jacobi and Schleiermacher have done a simple act of justice in ranging him among the mystics and the saints.

These contrary impressions led me to suspect that there might possibly be a law inherent in the very essence of Pantheism, which condemns it, in spite of the intellectual strength of its most powerful interpreters, to an eternal oscillation between two errors. To verify this conjecture, it was necessary to leave Spinoza, his age and language, and to seek the essence, the idea, the law of Pantheism, athwart all its vicissitudes, and under all the different forms with which it has been able to clothe itself. I set to work to study Pantheism, beginning with the most ancient schools of Greece. I was anxious to follow it in the entire course of its developments, visiting in turn the Stoic and Alexandrian Schools, Zeno and Chrysippus, Plotinus and Porphyry, then Scotus Erigena and the heterodox Mystics of the Middle Age; then the Neo-Platonics of the *Renaissance*, Michel Servetus and Giordano Bruno. But I set myself above all to grasp the first appearance of Pantheism in modern philosophy. I questioned Descartes, Malebranche, Leibnitz; I meditated upon Kant and the *Criticism of the Pure Reason*, and made every effort to understand Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. I only paused in these protracted historical studies when I believed that I had found the object of my researches, and that I was in possession of the leading idea of Pantheism, of the necessary law of its development, and of its radical flaw.

I was satisfied with these results, and, as frequently happens in such cases, considerably exaggerated their importance. I considered that I had escaped completely from Pantheism, and was

Is this oscillation between Atheism and Mysticism the congenital malady of every Pantheistic system? The question could only be answered by a historical survey of all its schools. Study of its older schools.

I And of Modern philosophy with a view to it.

Result of the Author's studies, in a dilemma addressed

to Pantheists, the value of which was at first over-rated by him.

Statement of Pantheistic system by its ablest advocates,

even in a position to refute it. What could the disciples of Bruno, of Spinoza, or of Hegel answer, when it was said to them, Your leading idea is the eternal and necessary consubstantiality of the finite and Infinite; of nature and God?

This, according to you, is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last word of all philosophy.

You pretend to escape from the difficulties which are fatal to other systems, by maintaining this idea intact and inviolate, across the whole series of the problems of philosophy. It is your boast that you do not act like the materialists and Atheists, who deny the Infinite, despise the religious sentiment, and come to an open rupture with the religious traditions of humanity; that on the other hand, you do not imitate the idealists and mystics in their extravagant negation of the finite realities of this living universe. You claim to reconcile the finite and the infinite, the senses and the pure reason, science and religion. How is this effected? By conceiving nature and God as two *faces* of the one sole and self-same existence. God is nature fastened to its immanent principle; nature is God considered in the evolution of His power. There is not on one side a solitary God, on the other an isolated universe: the Creator is incessantly incarnated in each of His creatures, and becomes each of them in turn. It may be said of God that He sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the animal, awakens in the man. Thus He assumes consciousness of Himself, though all the degrees of universal existence. This continuous movement of the Divine, this progress which causes it to pass through forms

that are always new, is the supreme law, is reality, is life.

I appeal to the Pantheists if this is not the meaning of their system, its distinctive and original character. But see what happens to them. So long as they remain upon the heights of abstraction, there is something seductive and deceptive to reason in the apparent clearness of these conceptions, and in the factitious rigour of the relations which link them together. But as soon as they leave these abstract notions, and proceed to apply their idea to definite problems, they meet with a stumbling-block, which is PERSONALITY. This has two great forms: one which is the model, the other which is the copy; one infinite and perfect, the other finite, yet sublime in its very imperfection. The first is the Providence of God, the other is the moral nature of man.

This statement refuted by a dilemma founded upon the two grand forms of personality, human and Divine.

But what becomes of personality in this system of the absolute unity of all existences? If the Pantheist wishes to preserve human personality, his system forces him to do so at the expense of the Divine. If, on the other hand, he wishes to preserve the Divine Personality, then the personality of man escapes and disappears. This dilemma is inevitable.

The dilemma.

In fact, from the moment that nature is conceived as the very life of God, it follows that God is *all*. I say *all*, not in comparison with our littleness or by an innocent exaggeration of speech, but rigorously and absolutely, *all*. For then God

One 'horn' —the annihilation of human personality.

<sup>1</sup> [Such "innocent exaggeration" is chiefly found in the religious Mystics. For instance Fenelon cries: "Que vois-je dans toute la nature ? Dieu. Dieu partout, et encore Dieu seul . . . vous engloutissez toute ma pensée; tout ce qui n'est point vous disparaît." De L'existence de Dieu.

is at once the infinite and the finite, eternity and time, universal Being and all particular beings. There is one only being, there is nothing but God. What then at this rate are we, you the Pantheistic philosopher who speak to me, and I who listen to you? Fragments of the Divine life. We are evidently not distinct persons, with their several lives and their proper destinies; what we call our life, our person, our destiny, are pure illusions. Finite existence melts away like a dream. God alone remains real and living. Man has nothing else to do in this world than to let the torrent of the Divine life flow within him, and lose himself in it, if he can.

The other  
'horn'—  
the anni-  
hilation of  
the Divine  
personality.

Do you shrink from such an extreme conclusion, and feel all your active powers awake against this lethargy of ecstasy? If you wish at once to save your own personality, and to cling to the absolute unity of existence, you must, as it were, take from God the reality which you had admitted that He possessed. You must conceive both yourself and all the beings in the world as individual and distinct realities; and then what becomes of that universal and impersonal being to which you were pleased to leave even yet the name of God? This pretended God is nothing more than an abstraction. Taken in itself, it is without reality and without life; it has neither consciousness, nor love, nor liberty, nor happiness; it is undetermined being, pure being, being which may become everything in general without

The poetry of Wordsworth has sometimes been accused of a Pantheistic tendency; but only by exercising the torturing powers of the sharpest metaphysical subtlety upon the soft and glowing flesh of poetical enthusiasm.]

being anything in particular; it is I know not what, a chaos, almost a nothing. Take care; you are near Atheism.

If this dialectical process is correct; if the medium which the disciples of Spinoza and Hegel wish to hold between Mysticism and Atheism, between a God who is all and a God who is nothing, be untenable; it follows that Pantheism, although it owes its principal attraction to the far-famed power of its logic, is essentially and fundamentally illogical.

This mode of refutation appeared to me irrefragable, and even now I think it founded upon reason. But as I advanced further into contemporary Pantheism and the problems of religious philosophy, I saw how far I was from having cut the root of great difficulties. What deceived me as to the power of my dilemma was, that I had never seriously questioned the Personality of God. Influenced by my Christian education; cast from my opening manhood into a current of spiritualist ideas; used to receive Plato, Descartes, and Leibnitz as the immortal masters of human wisdom; I considered the principle of Divine Providence as a sort of condition *à priori* imposed by common sense upon every system of philosophy. No doubt this illusion was a relic of childish innocence. It must be confessed that I was far behind my age and my country. It was already a widely-spread doctrine, not only in Germany, but in France and all Europe, that a God distinct from the world, a Personal God, the Father and the Judge of men, is a superstition. It required constant intercourse with the partisans of Pan-

This dilemma does not cut to the root of Pantheism.

To push  
Hegelians  
to a denial of  
the person-  
ality of God  
is to them  
no *reductio  
ad absurdum*.

Hegelian  
scorn of  
Theism.

Spinozism  
but the  
modest be-  
ginning of  
Pantheism.

(last) theism, and above all, the deeper study of the masters of Germany, Hegel, Strauss, and Feuerbach, before my eyes were opened to the true condition of contemporary philosophy. I then saw that to push the Hegelians to the denial of God's Personality was not, as I had fancied, to refute them by a *reductio ad absurdum*. The sacrifice, which I supposed impossible, appeared to them the easiest thing in the world.

What! they said—have you not yet advanced beyond this Personal God, concentrated in His solitary perfection, who, one day, we know not why, moved forth from His eternal blessedness to create the universe?<sup>1</sup> It was hardly worth your while to study Spinoza so closely, and you have derived but scanty profit from your reading. When Hegel advises young people to read Spinoza, it is to accustom them by little and little to get rid of the childish idea of a Personal God. "Thought," he says, "must absolutely elevate itself to the level of Spinozism, before rising higher again. Do you wish to be philosophers? Begin by being

<sup>1</sup> [No accusation against Christian Theism is more common among the Pantheistic schools than that it presents a "solitary God." A profound answer to this objection is to be found in the ancient ecclesiastical writers. They argue against the proposition that the Godhead is *μονοπόσωπος*, a single solitary hypostasis, on the ground that thus we cannot well conceive that *αὐτάρκεα*, that perfect bliss which He had from all eternity. Thus Tertullian: "Ante omnia Deus erat solus . . . cæterum ne tunc quidem solus; habebat enim secum quam habebat in seipso, rationem suam scilicet. Hanc Græci Λόγον dicant." *Advers. Prax.* Cap. V. And Origen. *Οὐ θέμις ἔστιν . . . ἀποστερεῖσθαι τὸν Θεὸν τοῦ δὲ συνόντος αὐτῷ Λόγου μονογενοῦς, Σοφίας ὅντος ἢ προσέ- χαιρεν. οὕτω γὰρ οὐδὲ δὲ χαίρων νοηθήσεται* Origen, apud Athanasium. *Tom. I. p. 277.* The passage in Proverbs viii. 22-31, which speaks of the Divine wisdom as "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," is a Scriptural confirmation of this, if we bear in mind the necessary personality of God's perfect self-manifestation.—See Bishop Bull's Works, Vol. II., p. 9. Let me be allowed to express my regret and surprise at the almost total neglect of the writings of Bull and Waterland on the

Spinozists : you can do nothing without that. It is necessary, before all, to bathe in that sublime ether of the sole, universal, and impersonal substance, where the soul becomes purified from all particularity, and rejects all, absolutely all, which it has hitherto believed true. You must have arrived at that negation which is the emancipation of the mind." Here is advice that you have not yet followed. Read Spinoza over again. Let your mind be imbued with his idea of substance. You will then understand that personality, consciousness, the *Ego*, transferred from man to God, are so many contradictions. To be a person, to be oneself, is to be distinguished from every other person.

In fact, the *Ego*, as Fichte has proved, supposes the *non ego*. Personality only exists on condition of a limitation, that is to say, by a negation. From this it follows that Infinite Being, excluding all negation and all limit, excludes also all personality. To conceive God as a person, we must attribute to Him the forms of human activity, thought, love, joy, will. But thought supposes variety and succession of ideas. Love cannot exist without want, nor joy without sadness, nor will without effort, and all this implies limitation, space, and time. A Personal God is therefore limited, mutable, im-

Fichte's  
argument  
against  
Personality  
of God.

Holy Trinity among our younger theological students. By Coleridge those writings have been recommended as one of the finest of metaphysical exercises. And I am sure that their theological principles, once imbibed, will form an admirable prophylactic against the Hegelian poison floating in the European atmosphere. It is a pity that the aberrations of Bishop Bull on Justification, in his *Harmonia Apostolica* (his first published work), should have been visited upon that great prelate's *Defensio Fidei Nicænæ*. I am sorry to be unable to cite here a beautiful passage from one of Mr. Newman's earlier sermons on the Trinity, untainted by any trail of Romanism, and as sublime in expression as it is primitive and philosophical in conception.]



perfect. He is a being of the same species as man, more powerful, wiser if you will, but like him imperfect, and infinitely below an absolute principle of existence.

Strauss  
against In-  
finite per-  
sonality.

"Personality," says Strauss, "is a self-concentrated *Ego* in opposition to another *Ego*; on the contrary, the absolute is the infinite, which embraces and contains all, and consequently excludes nothing. An absolute personality is therefore sheer nonsense, an absurd idea. God is not a person by the side of and above other persons; but the eternal movement of universal existence which is only realized, and becomes objective in the subject. The personality of God must not therefore be conceived as individual, but as a universal personality (*Allpersönlichkeit*), and in place of personifying the absolute, we must learn to conceive of it as personifying itself *ad infinitum*."<sup>1</sup>

In what  
sense, ac-  
cording to  
Strauss,  
God is om-  
niscient.

Common sense says that God is omniscient. "Common sense is right," answers Strauss; "God is omniscient, because he embraces all finite intelligences, who, in their sum total, represent all possible degrees of knowledge."<sup>2</sup> In these finite intelligences, in man especially, God assumes self-consciousness; and here we have precisely the meaning of the poetic image of Schelling, that *man is the hero of the eternal epic composed by the Divine intelligence*.

I must confess that it was long before I became accustomed to this language, and these thoughts, and longer still before I clearly saw the extreme position to which they tended. Heretofore I had

<sup>1</sup> Strauss, *Glaubenslehre*, Vol. II., 505-524.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. I., p. 575.

seen in Pantheism a sincere, though ineffectual, effort to reconcile man's conviction of finite realities with his aspiration towards God. My protracted study of Spinoza had not shaken me in this opinion, and it was thus that I explained to myself the concealed Christianity, and traits of spiritual mysticism, which are spread over his writings. On the other side, I was assured that Hegel deserved as little as Spinoza the accusation of impiety, and that his philosophy was profoundly spiritual and Christian. I took these declarations sincerely; and even now I am inclined to think that Spinoza and Hegel were religious in intention. But what are individual intentions worth, when they are opposed to the logical sequence of ideas, especially when it is aided and flung forward by the spirit of the age? We must open our eyes, and recognise the fact that contemporary Pantheism, placed like every Pantheistic system, between two opposite tendencies, one of which leads to mysticism, and another whose ultimate bourne is Atheism—has boldly taken its position, and sacrificed the Personality of God.

Spinoza and Hegel perhaps not intentionally anti-Theistic, but of the two opposite tendencies of Pantheism, Mysticism, and Atheism, their schools necessarily reach the latter.

Besides, in our modern Europe, a system which should boldly take for its watchword the negation of human individuality would have considerable difficulty in persuading the world that it was in earnest. The sentiment of individuality is superabundant at the present day, and is associated with an energetic want not less opposed to Mysticism,—the want of activity. I mean that activity which develops itself outwardly, which acts upon nature by industry, and upon men by speech and thought. For good or for evil, a boundless thirst

The extreme mystical tendency of Pantheism impossible to modern European thought and feeling.

for terrestrial enjoyments, and a strong yearning for external activity, appeared to me to be the characteristic of our time. It is therefore very natural that the mystic Pantheism of Baader and Goerres should have fallen, and I can well understand how, on the contrary, the Pantheism of Hegel and Feuerbach should have made, and daily should be making, the most alarming progress.

Spread of  
Hegelian-  
ism assisted  
by contem-  
porary  
schools of  
philosophy.

This general predisposition, and this progress of Hegelian Pantheism, are serious facts. But the full extent of their seriousness I had not apprehended before considering the present condition of philosophic schools. Without exaggerating the importance of that which is called a school, it is certain that all, even the obscurest, indicate the various currents of ideas which divide between them the spirit of an age. But with the exception of that in which I had been educated, I mean the spiritual school, with its diverse ramifications, it appeared to me that all the rest, even those which disdained and those which combatted Pantheism, concurred with it to undermine man's faith in Divine providence, and to substitute for it the Hegelian idea of impersonal being, the indifferent and unconscious cause of everything which exists.

Review of  
contempo-  
rary philo-  
sophical  
schools in  
their bear-  
ing on Pan-  
theism.

Let us take a rapid survey of the most important of these schools, not to study them in themselves, but solely to establish what they appear to have in common.

1. Critical  
or sceptical  
school.

Three sec-

We shall first meet with a great number of distinguished thinkers, who, without having a common origin, or using the same terminology, or following any pre-arranged design, form a

natural group which I will call the *sceptical*, or, if the term be preferred, the *critical*, school.

Of these philosophers, some draw their inspiration from Scotland, and accept the teaching of Hamilton. <sup>(a) Scot-</sup>  
<sup>Oxonian,</sup>  
<sup>or Hamil-</sup>  
<sup>tonian.</sup>

Others prefer to attach themselves to Germany and to Kant. <sup>(β) Ger-</sup>  
<sup>man.</sup>

Some, again, wish to stand by themselves, borrowing from scepticism one or other only of its ideas, and convinced that they are free to reject the rest. <sup>(γ) Inde-</sup>  
<sup>pendent.</sup>

And what do these philosophers say? That the only wise course in matters of religion is to leave the idea of God absolutely undetermined. In fact, according to them, the supreme law of human thought is to *determine* its objects, that is, to conceive them in space, in time, with such and such properties, limits, and relations. Hence it follows that God, the Absolute, the Immense, the Eternal, by His very greatness escapes from human thought. To determine the idea of God is, according to them, to destroy it; for it is to individualise and personify that which is universal—it is to cramp it into a system, to impose on it the form of our imperfect intelligence, to diminish and degrade it. Unquestionably man is so constituted that nothing finite can suffice him; he springs beyond the universe in search of an ideal of beauty, a perfect object of love, hope, and adoration. This struggle of man towards the Infinite, this regard for eternal things, is the holy origin of religious and philosophical systems. But every religion, however pure and sublime, may be reduced to a particular symbol of the

Divinity, just as every philosophy, and the largest and deepest not less than the narrowest and most superficial, may be resolved into a determinate formula of the absolute. But the ideal, the divine, the absolute, is just what cannot be represented by any one symbol, or expressed by any one formula. Religion and philosophy, then, like art, like morality, like man himself, are condemned to an endless *becoming*. Here, then, is briefly the religious condition of humanity. The mass of mankind is blindly agitated in searching after an inaccessible ideal. Some select minds coolly observe this feverish agitation, note down its accesses, describe its crises, its convulsions, and all its vicissitudes, in a strain of poetical feeling. When asked what the object of it is they reply, that the true philosopher meditates on it incessantly whilst he knows that he must be ignorant of it for ever.

Tends to  
scepticism.

It is quite clear that minds of this mould are but little disposed to be duped by the ambitious constructions of German Pantheism. But it is also clear that they give considerable assistance to the Pantheists in making a breach in the old ideas of God, the Creator, and of providence; and that they dispose a great number of liberal thinkers, who are terrified by scepticism, to the Hegelian idea of an impersonal God.

2. The  
Positive  
School.

There are other philosophers who give themselves the title of *Positive*, and who profess to establish their doctrine upon visible and palpable facts, to the exclusion of those *à priori* notions, those absolute ideas of substance, essence, final cause, which are gratuitous hypotheses, chimeras,

with which the antiquated metaphysic fed its vain systems and their eternal polemics. They want, they say, a real and demonstrable philosophy, which increases with the progress of observation. They start from material facts. They set about describing, comparing, classifying them, and eliminating by analysis, induction, and analogy, the laws which are contained in them. This, according to them, is the only object worthy of occupying an age in which the physical and mathematical sciences have won their way to sovereign dominion. Men naturally began by questioning their *imagination* on the causes of the universe: this was the epoch of *religions*. At a later period, in proportion to the advancing cultivation of the *intellect*, poetic symbols were replaced by metaphysical hypotheses and abstract conceptions: this was the age of *philosophical systems*. Finally, in our own times, men, having learned to read the universe and themselves, have nothing more to do with the deceptive dreams of imagination, nor with the arbitrary combinations of pure reason; they turn to *experience*, and ask of it only what it is able to give, *facts and laws*, and thus we enter upon the era of *Positive Science*.<sup>1</sup> Is the conclu-

<sup>1</sup> [This generalisation is praised by Mr. Mill with unusual warmth. "Speculation he conceives to have three successive stages; in the first of which it tends to explain the phenomena by supernatural agencies; in the second by metaphysical abstractions; and in the third, or final state, confines itself to ascertaining their laws of succession and similitude. This generalisation appears to him to have that high degree of scientific evidence which is derived from the concurrence of the inductions of history with the probabilities derived from the constitution of the human mind. Nor could it be easily conceived from the mere enunciation of such a proposition, what a flood of light it lets in upon the whole course of human history."—Logic, Vol. II., p. 616. It is curious that the first and third of these stages should have been exactly signalled by Plutarch. The ancients, he tells us, looked exclusively to the divine in

sion from this, that there is absolutely nothing beyond visible things? Positive philosophy does not go so far. On questions of absolute ideas, of the origin and end of things, it declares itself simply incompetent. It is neither for matter nor mind, neither sceptical nor believing, neither Theistic nor Atheistic. Is there a God, a providence, a future life? It neither affirms nor denies; it has nothing to say to the matter.

Positive philosophy meets Pantheism and scepticism.

I am not discussing at this moment the degree of truth and originality in this point of view. But I do say to positive philosophy, that in concentrating science and human life upon finite objects, in leaving the ideal and the divine in a state of complete indetermination, it joins with the Pantheistic and Sceptical schools, and conspires to the same result.

3. The Theological School.

Two sections,

(a) The anti-rational, ultra-montane, and ultra-Calvinist.

(β) The Moderate.

Let us now turn to the opposite extreme of the horizon. There we find the theological school with an imposing and numerous array of supporters. Of this school there are two well-defined sections which I am not confounding. To tell reason that it is *insufficient* in religion, and to say to it that it is *utterly barren*, to see in it a source of light and truth, a source that is beneficent, although nothing can come from it sufficient to fill the heart of man; or to look upon it as a Satanic power, a gnawing worm, a pest, a poison,

phenomena, the moderns exclusively to natural causes. Is Plutarch less philosophical than Comte, when he asserts that both views are partial and defective, simply because they are *exclusive*? The one forgets the originating source, the other the intermediaries. Eliminate neither of the two elements, but learn their true relation. "Ὅθεν ἀμφοτέρους ὁ λόγος ἐνδεής τοῦ προσήκοντός ἐστιν, τοῖς μὲν τὸ δι' οὗ καὶ ὑφ' οὗ, τοῖς δὲ το' ἐξ ὧν καὶ δι' ὧν ἀγνοοῦσιν ἢ παραλείπουσιν, De defectu oraculorum, c. 47. See Neander, Vol. I., p. 31, Church History, Clark's Translation.]"

these are surely different positions, and indicate different minds and characters. But whatever the moderation, the knowledge, the good faith, the Christian spirit, on one side; on the other, the violence, the blindness, the spirit of defamation and hatred; it is nevertheless true that the theological school, considered in its general influence on men's intellects, helps to propagate the idea that the human reason is incapable of attaining to God, and that, separated from supernatural assistance, it tends of itself, according to the spirit of the time, to Pantheism, to Scepticism, to Materialism; ever at an infinite distance from the true and living God, and ever ready to embrace an abstract and chimerical Deity.

Thus from the bosom of all our contemporary schools, where the restless labour of man's intellect is concentrated, currents of contrary ideas take their departure. Of these ideas some are Scotch, some German, some of Roman Catholic, some of Protestant origin, sceptical, Pantheistic, materialist, ultramontane, pietist, and what not; but all these ideas concur in obscuring and effacing the holy and truly natural idea of a personal God, the free and intelligent Creator of the universe, the Judge and Father of the human race.

Thus all contemporary schools tend to obscure the idea of a personal God.

It is impossible to witness such a spectacle, and to feel in one's own consciousness the reaction from these struggles of thought, without asking uneasily where our age is going, and without a melancholy retrospect of its past. We see the point at which we have arrived, after half a century of labour. Is it to attain so miserable a result, that the great intellectual revival took place

Melancholy fall of philosophy.



which so gloriously signalised the beginning of the age in which we live? With what ardent enthusiasm did this century spring forth upon its career! It accepted all the generous instincts which it inherited from the past; it only repudiated its materialism and its spirit of impiety. To the narrow and wretched ideology of Condillac succeeded a larger and loftier philosophy, which, prompted successively by Leibnitz, by Thomas Reid, and by Plato, revived the traditions of the highest metaphysics, and aspired to understand and to reconcile the great thoughts of the human mind. At the same time the poetry of the ancient creeds blossomed anew in the *Genie du Christianisme*, and in the *Martyrs*. An undefinable triumphant current of spirituality circulated in every direction, gave to history its coloured style and its vast horizon, enlarged criticism, reanimated poetry and the fine arts, and inspired the singer of the *Meditations* with accents of a sublime melancholy, with a tenderness and harmony hitherto unknown. Men's souls stripped themselves of their egotism and of the littleness of vulgar interests, and leaped forward to the athletic encounters of public life. It was a time of enthusiasm and confidence, of mutual sympathy, of the rejuvenescence of life, and of the vital sap of a genuine morality.

To Materialism or irrational fanaticism.

With such noble impulses as these—I appeal to all its recollections—the nineteenth century commenced. Is it possible that so much genius and enthusiasm, such profound speculations, such rare master-pieces, should end in an abortion?—that our age, in the middle of its career, should

give the lie to its past; and that of its two noblest undertakings, the revival of spiritual philosophy, and that of Christian feeling, the first should end in a more or less disguised return to materialism, and the second in a foolish fanaticism, the blind enemy of reason, which, exhausting the source of the religious sentiment, leaves room in the soul only for a senile docility, a superstitious credulity, a devotion without light and without love?

I can never believe that this is the destiny reserved for our age. And yet, to look things in the face, if God is only an unreal abstraction to the reason, if finite being is the only real existence, if the old opposition between the things of heaven and those of earth is unmeaning, if all being is but the product of a blind necessity, which gives birth to the successive modes of life, to absorb them for ever, the inevitable consequence is that men have been slumbering on to the present day in perfect infancy. In making two parts of their thought and of their soul, one for earth and man, the other for God, they have lost one half of themselves. In the eyes of the enlightened man, heaven is nothing but the insatiable and immortal desire of perfecting and beautifying earth.<sup>1</sup> Every ideal vanishes. The artist has nothing to do but to copy reality with a servile pencil; the statesman's business is to ascertain

Practical  
results of  
these speculative  
errors.

<sup>1</sup> ["All opinions of theological origin, whatever the theology be—it even the purest Deism—are radically illusory. The personal activity of man must no longer waste itself on mutual hostilities, but must set itself peaceably to carry forward the work of developing the resources of the earth—man's residence."—*Comte's Catechism of Positive Philosophy*, p. 5.]

and to satisfy the strongest appetites of a country; the moralist must note the various proportions<sup>1</sup> in which the benevolent or repulsive passions are united in life, in order to profit by the one and to guard against the other. In short, all problems, the social and the moral, like the religious, changing their *data*, require other solutions, and among the thinkers of the day who are looking for such solutions, there are only two kinds of logically consistent minds—those who, decrying science, reason, and progress, dream of a return to the theocracy of the Middle Ages; and those who desire a radical reconstruction of human life and society.

The Author's purpose.

All this has led me to consider the question of the Divine Personality as one of the vital questions of our time. It is for stronger intellects than mine to resolve it, to waken men's souls from their sleep, to give hope and confidence to our weary century, to bestow new splendour and strength upon the great truths of spiritual philosophy. For myself, my purpose has been to give a good example, by simply making known the results to which I have been led by patient studies and serious meditations. I introduce no new system, and speak in the name of no school. I merely relate how, after traversing difficulties, doubts, anxieties, and all the trials inseparable from free examination, I have come to satisfy my mind upon the essential points of religion, and to possess my soul in peace.

<sup>1</sup> Sudden resentment, permanent anger, and all the other affections belonging to the *irascible* part of our nature, such as hatred and malice are the *passions nuisibles*, which I have translated *repulsive*.

I have followed in this work a very simple order—that of my own studies and reflections. Order followed in this work. Beginning by a review of the great philosophers, First, a review of great modern philosophers. I have related the impressions which I have derived from conversing with them, and proposing to them my doubts and difficulties. I have laid aside the ancients, as too remote from our habits, our language, and our modern life generally. I think I have not omitted any man of creative genius among the thinkers of the two last centuries. I have consulted Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, with as scrupulous a respect as Descartes, Malebranche, Newton, and Leibnitz. This inquiry terminated, I have developed the course of my own meditations. Then, his own meditations. I have not set aside any great problem, nor dissembled any doubt, nor purposely eluded any objection. It was my conviction that correctness and perfect honesty in this arduous inquiry were the only means by which I could obtain pardon for the temerity of my undertaking. I conceived also that the simplest form, and that which was most free from scholastic and scientific affectation was most suitable to a simple seeking for truth. I have not addressed myself to a *symposium* of metaphysicians. I have written for those cultivated and generous minds who, without priding themselves upon a metaphysical genius, wish to make use of their reason in religion as in other matters. The number at present is great. It is hourly increasing. Why should we deceive ourselves? We are far, very far, from those ages of innocence when peaceable faith was the rule, and unquiet investigation the exception. Formerly men admired the faith of a St.

Anselm,<sup>1</sup> in pursuit of intellectual light, *Fides quærens intellectum*—at this day it is intellect which is in pursuit of faith.

<sup>1</sup> [German philosophy has produced one subtle and accurate exposition of St. Anselm's theory of the connection of faith with reason—F. R. Hasse *Anselm von Canterbury*, 3, 2. In speaking on the rational satisfaction of the human mind upon the Incarnation and the Atonement, Anselm mentions with approbation those "who desire, not to approach to faith by reason, but to be delighted by the intellectual development and contemplation of those things which they already believe." Boso, the interlocutor in the dialogue, *Cur Deus Homo*, lays it down as an undeniable rule of order (*sicut rectus ordo exigit*), that "we should believe the deep things of the Christian faith, before we presume to discuss them rationally." Cf. *Proslogium*, c. 1. "Non tento, Domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullo tenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quæro intelligere, ut credam; sed credo ut intelligam." Perhaps I may be allowed to say that the truth lies in the mean between the position of Anselm and that which M. Saisset assigns to modern philosophy. I can see little ground for the chronological controversies as to the priority of faith and reason, or for the violent schism made between them by fanaticism on the one hand, and by a vulgar and unbelieving philosophy on the other. Faith without reason is the sublimity of folly; reason without faith is the motto of an ambition which soars for a moment only to grovel without redemption. "Faith without works" is expressly disapproved in the New Testament; and "faith without reason" is nearly as much a variance with its general spirit.

**Part I.**

**HISTORICAL STUDIES.**



## First Treatise.

### *The Theism of Descartes.*

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I WISH to know if there is a God. I mean by that term a Being supremely adorable, my Creator, my Judge, and my Father; or if I am the product of a blind necessity, which makes all the possible forms of existence successively appear, and immediately plunges them back into the abyss from whence they have issued. Upon questioning the reasoners and philosophers of the day, I find them disagreed. Some who are classed as spiritual philosophers believe in Divine Providence; others, under the various names of Pantheists, sceptics, and materialists, incline more or less to blind necessity. Theism or Pantheism.

Spiritual faith and philosophy subjugates my reason and touches my heart. I feel a secret predilection which attracts me to it. How is this? Possibly the idea of God the Creator is consonant to my Christian education; and consequently this idea, on a comparison of the two systems, appears to be the most reasonable, and the nearest to common sense. But had I been born in India or Japan, would not Pantheism have been more conformable to the impressions of my infancy, and Is the predilection for Theism the result of a Christian education and medium?



therefore more in accordance with good sense? For good sense changes with religious creeds, with times and countries. The good sense of former times would be absurd to-day, and I live in the midst of a Christian and European good sense, which is not that of the rest of the world.

It is proper  
for ordinary  
thinkers to  
consult the  
great The-  
istic philo-  
sophers.

In what then shall I trust? As I cannot find any certain external rule, I am tempted to imitate Descartes, to wrap myself up within myself, and to trust to nothing but my own reason. But am I a Descartes to be entitled to pursue this course? I am but an ordinary thinker, and from the moment that I find myself near Descartes, Newton, and Leibnitz, who have passed their life in reflecting upon the problem which torments me, how can I do otherwise than consult them?

These philo-  
sophers  
not so mu-  
tually con-  
tradictory.

But, it may be said, they contradict each other. Is that so sure? Perhaps the best among them do agree in essentials. At all events, even if we must draw them up in two hostile lines—on one side, Descartes with Malebranche, Newton, and Leibnitz, and on the other side, the disciples of Spinoza and of Kant—I wish to be present at the combat, and to test the powers of the two doctrines. When I have heard the strongest argument for and against the Theism of spiritual philosophy, it will be time for me to take my side.

I must begin very differently from Descartes, to imitate him better in the end. Descartes, too, had travelled much, before he became a recluse. He had spent long years in all the countries of Europe. But no necessity is imposed upon me of changing my place. Thanks to a few books, I can at will pass from France to Holland

with Descartes, and consult Spinoza at Amsterdam, Newton at London, Leibnitz at Hanover, and Kant at Königsberg. I shall, in the first instance, turn to Descartes, for he borrows from no preceding philosopher, and all his successors borrow from him.

Descartes was naturally led by the course of his thoughts to put these questions to himself: <sup>Descartes, his thorough-paced</sup> What is God? Is there a God? He was tormented by a yearning after perfect clearness in his thoughts, and by a desire to attach them to a small number of simple and certain verities. But when he came to investigate the state of his own mind, he found nothing there but educational and scholastic prejudice, a mass of contradictory opinions, confusion, doubt, and obscurity. "Thenceforth," he writes, "I judged rightly that I must seriously make up my mind, once for all in my life, to rid myself of all the opinions that I had previously admitted into my belief, and to begin all anew from the very foundation, if I wished to establish anything scientifically strong and consistent."<sup>1</sup>

He then sets to work, and resolutely rejects everything in which he can imagine the least doubt, "in order to see whether there would not remain in his belief somewhat that was entirely indubitable."

Nothing is allowed to resist this test, neither the most familiar *data* of the senses, nor the very truths of geometry. Descartes distrusts his very eyes and ears, those suspected witnesses which had frequently deceived him. How else was it possible to discriminate by any certain sign the

<sup>1</sup> *Méditations*—Opera, Tom. I. p. 235.

illusions of dreaming from the perceptions of our waking existence? He will doubt then of earth and heaven, and of his own body, as well as of the rest of the universe.

Mathematical truths alone emerge from the wreck, and they only apparently.

But there are objects which appear to defy the boldest doubt, supposing it to be sincere: such are mathematical truths, extension in general, number, time, and the like. "For, whether I wake or sleep, two and three always make five, and the square has never more than four sides; and it does not seem possible that truths so clear and apparent can be suspected of any falsehood or uncertainty." Yet Descartes still doubts. Who can say whether God has made human reason to know things as they are? Who knows even if there be a God, and can assure me that my mind is not the plaything of some malevolent genius, who laughs at my illusions?

The proposition, "I exist," remains.

It would seem then as if the final conclusion of Descartes and of human reason was universal and absolute doubt. But it is not so. Descartes makes certainty spring from the very bosom of doubt. In fact, in the very lowest deep of doubt there is something which escapes it; and that is the very subject of doubt, the subject which thinks, the *Ego*.

"Am not I, then, at least something? But I have already denied that I had any sense or any body. Yet I hesitate, for what follows from that? Am I dependent on my body and my senses, so that I cannot exist without them? But I have persuaded myself that there was nothing at all in the world, no heaven, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Have I not then convinced myself that I

do not exist? Far from it; undoubtedly I exist, if I am convinced of, if I only think of, anything. But there is some one whose thought and craft are industriously employed in continually deceiving me. Well, if he deceives me, there is no doubt that I exist; and let him deceive me as long as he will, he cannot cause me to be nothing so long as I shall think myself to be something. So that after long thought and careful examination of all these things, I must conclude and hold for proved, that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true, so often as I pronounce or conceive it in my mind."<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, Descartes has got beyond universal doubt. He is in possession of a first truth, simple, clear, and distinct, in short, *evident*; and even from this he learns that clearness and distinctness of ideas<sup>2</sup> are the infallible signs of truth. But he is yet imprisoned within the limits of his thinking existence. Who shall liberate him, or restore to him the universe which he has lost?

Here Descartes plunges back into self-introspection, and in the depth of his soul he discovers an idea ever present, though often hidden by the false glare of sensible objects and by the phantoms of the imagination. It is the idea of the all-perfect Being. This grand idea does not come from without, neither is it the creation of my fancy; it is inherent to my intellectual existence, and, so to speak, born with me. "How were it possible for me to know that I doubt and that I desire;

In the truth of personal existence is involved the existence of God.

<sup>1</sup> Meditations, i. 247.

<sup>2</sup> [Clearness belongs to definition, distinctness to division. That is clear which is definite as a whole; that is distinct, which is articulated into its parts. See Leibnitz *Meditationes de Cognitione Veritatis et Ideæ*, and compare Mansel's *Prolegomena*, p. 191, and again p. 230.]

that is to say, that I want something, and that I am not all perfect; without having in me some idea of a being more perfect than mine?"

But whence, pursues Descartes, have I learned to think of something more perfect than I am? This problem leads him to a demonstration of the existence of God, a truth in his eyes clearer and more certain than geometry, simpler and of more immediate inference than the existence of bodies.

Demon-  
stration  
that the  
idea of God  
comes from  
Him.

Here is his first demonstration. I know that I am. But what am I? A being who doubts; that is, who is imperfect. But I cannot consider my own imperfections and limitations without conceiving the infinitely Perfect Being. Whence does this idea come to me? It cannot come from the stock of my own existence, since I feel that I am imperfect. It does not come from the outer world, which (on the hypothesis that there is one) is more imperfect again. It must then be given to me by the Perfect Being Himself; otherwise there would be more in the idea than in its object, and the effect would be greater than its cause; which is a contradiction.

Or in another shape. I who think of the Perfect Being, do I exist by myself? Certainly not: for were I capable of giving myself existence, *à fortiori* should I be able to give myself all the perfections of which I have the idea. And then, were I the creator of my existence, I should be its preserver every instant, I should feel within me the power of creation and preservation, whilst on the contrary I experience the perpetual need of my being, the certain sign of my dependence upon a higher principle.

Descartes is delighted with the simplicity of these proofs. What in fact do they suppose? Some simple *data* of consciousness—that I exist in so far as I think, that I feel that I am imperfect, and that I have the idea of perfection; and with these a principle equally simple, viz., that the idea of infinite perfection cannot have a finite and imperfect object for its cause. What admirable simplicity! We have not here scholastic arguments, founded upon the impossibility that matter should move itself, or upon the spectacle of the universe and the correspondence of means with ends; or again, upon the unanimous consent of all peoples.<sup>1</sup> In place of these complicated

Simplicity of this proof, compared with the argument from the *primum mobile*, and with the physico-theological and traditional proof.

<sup>1</sup> [The various proofs that there is an intelligent Author of nature, and moral governor of the world, are summed up by Bishop Butler in a sentence, which is really so like a mile of golden thread packed up within the circumference of a ring, that I have ventured to print it here in a shape which may make it more impressive to some students:—

“For as

I. There is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it; so

II. It has often been proved with accumulated evidence:

(a) From this argument of analogy and final causes.

(b) From abstract reasonings,

(c) 1. From the most ancient tradition and testimony.

2. And from the general consent of mankind.”—*Analogy, Introd.*

Grotius has a good and solid sentence of the same kind. Speaking of the awful statement that there is no God, he adds: “Cujus contrarium cum nobis partim ratio, partim traditio perpetua inseverint, confirmant vero et argumenta multa et miracula ab omnibus sæculis testata.”—*De Jure Belli et Pacis*, Proleg. 11.

Modern philosophers since Kant have divided the Theistic arguments into the ontological (“abstract reasonings”), cosmological, physico-theological, and moral. Of all the arguments adduced Kant (and Hamilton) would consider the last alone *logically* valid and irrefragable. The ontological involves a passage from the abstract to the concrete, from the ideal to the real. The cosmological stands or falls with a particular theory of causation. The physico-theological is practically very cogent; but the spectacle of the order and beauty of the universe would not lead us beyond a wise and powerful Creator, without implying necessarily omniscience and omnipotence. The argument from consent may be weakened, by asserting the existence of a prejudice as universal.

The last argument, however, has lately been put in a new and power-

premises, which are subject to many exceptions from those who reject the authority of the senses, tradition, and final causes, a true philosophy falls back upon itself, and finding in itself the sentiment of its own imperfection, and the idea of Supreme Perfection, raises itself spontaneously and without effort to the existence of the Perfect and Infinite Being.

Cartesian  
proof *à*  
*priori*.

Descartes, then, is well satisfied when he compares his own demonstration with the common proofs. But in proceeding to consider it by itself,

ful form. That man forms a separate kingdom is a proposition which can only be denied by some purblind physiologist. Where, then, are the *phenomena* which do not occur in other animals? Among the *mammifera*, and especially among the apes, there is an absolute identity with man in many features of anatomical composition. The peculiarity of the *as sublime* belongs to the clumsy penguin and the waddling duck. Of intelligence the animal has some faint outlines; between the pointer and the philosopher it is a question of more or less. M. Agassiz considers that a scientific notification of the growlings of bears in various lands would lead the way to a derivation of one from the other, as indubitable as the process by which Professor Müller at Oxford traces Sanscrit and Greek to one genealogical tree. The sentiments of love and hatred, and the parental affection, are roughly and rudimentally in the brute and bird. The associating faculty is developed in the castor and the bee. But the notions of morality and of a future existence—the faculties which we may call moral and religious—exist, however rudely and with whatever grotesqueness of form, wherever man is to be found. One is not likely to forget the exceptions that have been made. The Australian languages have no words to render *justice*, *sin*, or *crime*. Be it so. Neither have they words to express generically *tree*, *fish*, or *bird*. It would be a precarious hypothesis indeed which should maintain that the aborigines are unacquainted with the *thing* signified by the *word fish*; and I think it equally precarious to assert that they are utterly unacquainted with the things signified by *right* and *wrong*. Accurate investigations have proved that the supposed Atheism of the Hottentots and Caffres is an overhasty conclusion, from the absence of images and sacrifices. And Dr. Livingstone tells us that the existence of God and a future life is “universally acknowledged in Africa.” Hence the fact, which has indeed been generalized into a law, that civilization can only come to savages through religion. Who will maintain that these primary and universal faculties of the noblest of animals are visionary and mendacious? This argument is developed powerfully by M. de Quatrefages, of the French Academy of Sciences, in a series of papers upon the Natural History of Man published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in 1860-61.]

he finds something wanting in point of simplicity. His geometer's ideal is not perfectly filled up. For in fact this proof, however simple it may be, is after all only a proof founded upon experience, and as the schools say *à posteriori*. I think, I exist, I feel that I am imperfect, here are truths which are extremely simple, but truths of observation. They are connected with a particular being, placed in such a place and such a time, who observes and questions himself, who reasons and concludes. Can we not find a yet simpler proof, a more general starting point, quite independent of every relative condition, a proof truly geometrical and absolute, and completely *à priori*? We can. It is sufficient for this to consider the idea of the Perfect Being in itself, abstracting from the subject which thinks it, and to operate upon this idea as geometers operate upon the idea of the circle or the triangle?

And now, *given* the concept of the Perfect Being. This concept, by its very definition, includes all perfections. Since existence is evidently a perfection, it therefore also includes existence. Consequently, the existence of the Perfect Being results solely by laying down the concept of the Perfect Being. And thus the existence of God is demonstrated *à priori* with all the rigorous processes of geometry.

This time Descartes is more than satisfied. He is delighted. His *à priori* proof seems to him the very ideal of simplicity and rigour. This conquest is so valuable in his estimation that he would willingly give up for it all the other truths which he has gained with such difficulty. "Though all my conclusions in the preceding meditations should



turn out to be untrue, the existence of God must pass in my mind as being established with the same certainty which I have heretofore accorded to mathematical verities."<sup>1</sup>

*Lacuna in  
Descartes'  
system—  
What is the  
Perfect  
Being?*

Descartes then is convinced, and I am convinced with him, that there is a God. This is a great step, I admit. But how far we are from the termination of our voyage! I have many questions to put to Descartes. And, first, what is the Perfect Being? You tell me that it means the Being who possesses all possible perfections. But how are we to determine these perfections, and obtain an idea of them?

*Answer.*

"To know the nature of God, so far as my nature was capable of it," answers Descartes, "I had only to consider about all things of which I found any idea in myself, whether or not it were a perfection to possess them; and I was assured that none of those which have any imperfection were in Him, but that all the others were."<sup>2</sup> Granted. This is an admirable rule. But what, according to him, are these perfections?

"By the name of God," says Descartes, "I mean an infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, omnipotent substance, by which I, and all other things which are (if it is true that there are things which exist), have been created and produced."

There are many enigmas in this definition.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, I. p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> *Discourse on Method*, vol. i. p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> [There is an impropriety in applying the word *definition* here. The last cited sentence of Descartes is what the elder logicians called an *ἀπογραφὴ*, a description, or necessarily imperfect definition. There is reverence as well as accuracy in the barbarous old rule, "Perfectam definitionem respuunt res infinitæ ut Deus."—*Burgersdyk Inst. Logic.* Lib. ii. c. 3.]

God is here laid down as the Creator, and consequently, as distinct from the universe, and self-sufficient.

But if God is self-sufficient, why has He created Difficulties the world? is it by a passing caprice which has given birth to a limited and perishable world? Then the work seems unworthy of the workman. But if the creation is by an eternal action, from which an infinite universe emanates, the work and its Author seem to be confounded; and then, is this universe given up to chance, or assuming it to be governed by Providence, how can we account for free will, error, and evil? Will so many real or apparent disorders be explained one day? What has man to hope for? where is reason to stop; and where does faith begin? These are questions which I should wish Descartes to answer, though, unfortunately, an answer is not supplied, either by the *Discourse on Method*, or by the *Meditations*. Did Descartes recoil before these problems? I believe not. Was he afraid of compromising solidly proved verities by questionable theories which he reserved for his friends? Let us see: let us consult his letters; let us ransack his least-known writings. Let us follow up the minutest indications, and try to ascertain what he thought or conjectured upon these problems, which were then perhaps less agitated, but which have become the most serious questions of our day.

Is or is not God, the All-perfect Being, distinct from the universe? does He exist in full self-sufficiency in the bosom of His infinite perfections; or must we conceive Him as being at once the

Is God distinct from the universe, according to Descartes?

substance and the cause of the universe, and only existing on condition of successively becoming all things?

Radically  
distinct.

On this capital point there can be no doubt. It is clear that Descartes has conceived God as a Being radically distinct from the universe. The peculiar characteristic of the Deity, according to him, is to be self-sufficient, self-existing, possessed of being, not potentially like a self-developing germ, but actually as finished and perfect Being. "When I reflect upon myself," he says, "not only do I know that I am an imperfect, incomplete, dependent thing, constantly tending to, and aspiring after something better and grander than I am, but I also know, at the same time, that He on whom I depend possesses in Himself all those great things after which I aspire, and whose ideas I find in myself, not indefinitely and merely potentially, but that He enjoys them in fact, actually and infinitely, and so that He is God."<sup>1</sup>

Why did  
God create?  
Three pos-  
sible solu-  
tions, cap-  
rice, neces-  
sity, wis-  
dom and  
goodness.

God is therefore a complete and self-sufficing Being. Why, then, has He become the Creator? Is it by accident, caprice, or chance? or by some mysterious necessity? or is it not rather by wisdom and goodness? Of these three alternatives one would willingly believe that the third is the only one at which Descartes could have stopped, for he proclaims a God who is free. And yet, the truth is, that he energetically repels this alternative, which drives him towards the other two.

Descartes refuses to admit any other reason

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, vol. i. p. 290.

for the creation of the universe than the absolute will of God, a will which, in itself, is entirely arbitrary and indifferent. To say that God resolved to give being to his creatures, because the universe, ideally represented in the eternal counsels of His wisdom, seemed to Him good, and worthy to exist, is to suppose that, anterior to the divine act which gives them reality, beings have an ideal existence, a suitableness, a beauty, a perfection, in short, a peculiar and eternal essence, with necessary relations which spring out of them, and which make up an inviolable and independent order. But to affirm this is to trench upon the divine omnipotence, which gives to all things, not their existence only, but their essence. It is that which makes them what they are. It gives them by its sole virtue beauty, fitness, and perfection. Before the creative act, the universe was neither good nor bad, neither worthy nor unworthy of existence. In relation to it, the will of God was absolutely indifferent. Why did God then resolve to create rather than not to create? This is an unreasonable question, which supposes that divine things are transacted like human affairs. In man, the will is never indifferent, or, at least, this indifference is the lowest degree of liberty.<sup>1</sup> Our gravest and noblest acts are determined by motives which are derived from the nature and fitness of things; but the divine will, anterior to all things, is of itself indifferent and undetermined.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the express doctrine of Descartes. "As for the liberty of free will," he says, "it is

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, i. p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ii. p. 324.

certain that the reason or essence of that which is in God is very different from that which exists in us, inasmuch as it is absurd to suppose otherwise, than that the will of God was, from all eternity, indifferent to all things which ever have been, or shall be, made. And this, seeing that there is no idea representative of good or truth, of what should be believed, done, or left undone, which one can feign to have been the object of the Divine understanding, before its nature was so constituted by the determination of His will. I am not speaking here of a simple chronological priority. Still further, I affirm that it was impossible that one such idea should have preceded the determination of the will of God by a priority of order or of nature, or of *ratio rationata*, as the schools speak, in such sort that this idea of good should have led God to choose one rather than the other. For instance, it is not from having seen that it was better that the world should be created in time than from eternity, that He willed to create it in time; and He did not will that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles, because He knew that it could not be otherwise. But, on the contrary, because He willed to create the world in time, it is therefore better thus than if He had created it from eternity. And because it was His will that the three angles of a triangle should necessarily be equal to two right angles, for that cause this proposition is true, and cannot be otherwise, and so on with everything else.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* ii. p. 348, sqq. [The moral philosophers of all ages may be divided into two great schools, the Independent and Dependent. The

At this rate, I would say to Descartes, the free will of God is not only the principle of existences, but even of essences, and it is necessary to affirm, that God has created truth as he has created the universe. He boldly endorses the statement. "It is certain that God is as much the author of the essence as of the existence of creatures. But this essence is nothing else than those eternal truths, which I do not conceive to emanate from God as rays from the sun; but I know that God is the Author of all things, and that these truths are something, and consequently, that He is their Author."

Descartes pushes this so far that he accuses the contrary opinion of paganism and superstition. He writes to Father Mersenne, 'To say that these truths are independent of God is in fact to speak of God as of a Jupiter or of a Saturn, and to make Him subject to Styx and the Parcæ. Do not hesitate, I beg of you, to maintain and publish everywhere that it is God who has established these laws in nature, as a king establishes laws in his kingdom.'<sup>1</sup> It only remains after this to say, what Descartes does not fail to say, that if twice two make four, it is because God has so willed it.

Independent school places the criterion of morality in conscience, with Butler; in the "categorical imperative," with Kant; in the reason superior to all other reasons, with Whewell. The Dependent, on the contrary, places the criterion in the civil constitution, with Mandeville; in happiness, with Paley; in the will of God, with some Christian moralists, who are attracted by the apparent piety of the theory, and blind to its real degradation of the moral attributes of God. Descartes belongs to this division of the school of Ethical Philosophy. The best refutation of this form of the Dependent theory of truth and morality will be found in the Euthyphron of Plato.]

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vi., p. 109.

All suspended on arbitrary will.

Thus all in the universe, not only actually existent individuals, but their possible relations, their order and their laws; everything, in short, is suspended from a primary Divine will, a will that is absolutely arbitrary, a primitive act of which we must not investigate the reason; for it has no reason but itself.<sup>1</sup>

Preservation a continuous creation.

Meanwhile, do the beings in the universe which have once received their existence retain it by virtue of their very nature? By no means. For my existence of to-day is not linked by any necessary connection with my existence of yesterday or of to-morrow. "The entire time of my life may be divided into an infinity of parts, each one of which in no sense depends upon the others; and thus, from the fact that I existed a little while ago, it does not follow that I shall exist now, were it not that at this moment some cause produces and creates me anew, so to speak; that is to say, preserves me."<sup>2</sup>

This law of continual preservation applied to God Himself.

Generalizing this observation, Descartes lays it down as a principle, that the conservation of substances is a continuous creation. And not only does he apply this principle to all substances, but he does not hesitate to extend it to God Himself. He asserts, and, in spite of the remonstrances of Caterus and Arnauld,<sup>3</sup> he persists in maintaining that one can conceive in God a positive power by

<sup>1</sup> [Professor Jowett has spoken somewhat sneeringly of those who have dwelt upon St. Paul's "good sense." The apostle seems to me, in one of his loftiest flights, to have established his character for good sense, and to have supplied in *our word* the antidote to Descartes' error, when he says of God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," *κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ Θελήματος αὐτοῦ*.—Ephes. i. 11.]

<sup>2</sup> *Meditations*, I. p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, I. p. 359.

which He in some sort gives Himself existence and all the perfections included in perfect existence, so that God is in this sense the cause of Himself, *causa sui*.<sup>1</sup> And similarly, we can conceive in God an act inherent in His infinite power, by which He preserves Him eternally. Not of course that it is reasonable to represent God as anterior to Himself, different from Himself, or the effect of Himself. All these conceptions and expressions are palpably absurd. But it is no less certain that the infinite, inexhaustible, and superabundant power of God, is a sort of most positive cause by which He possesses and preserves eternally His being and His perfections.<sup>2</sup>

From God, so to say, creating and preserving Himself by one sole and indivisible act, Descartes passes to creation, and draws a very remarkable application from his principle. This is the celebrated law of the preservation of the same quantity of motion in the universe. It is, in fact, a contradiction to conceive the creative act as variable and successive. There is no inconstancy nor effort in God. In Him all is immutable. And though we are obliged provisionally, for a better representation to ourselves of the order of creation, to conceive Him as developing Himself under the condition of time, "if we consider the omnipotence of God, we should judge that all which He has done has had from the beginning all the perfection which it ought to have had."<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, since one sole act has made the

Hence (applying this principle to creation) the law of the conservation of the same quantity of motion.

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations*, II. p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Principia*, Part II., § 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, I. 380; II. 70.



world, its motion, and its laws, we should believe also that one sole act preserves it in the same fashion and with the same laws, and consequently maintains without cessation in the corporeal universe, one and the same quantity of motion.<sup>1</sup> The mind of man, subject to the condition of time, and given up to its vicissitudes, makes a distinction in its feebleness between the creative act which has drawn everything out of nothing, and the act of preservation which maintains everything in existence. But in truth there is but one perfect, immutable, eternal act, by which the changeful beings of this world are created, and preserved every instant; that is to say, re-created during the whole course of their existence.

The Cartesian theory of the co-extensiveness of matter with extension implies an Infinite (or, as Descartes prefers to say, an indefinite) world.

And here I would ask Descartes if this Divine act produces an effect in proportion with Divine power; I mean a Universe infinite in greatness; or if it confines itself to sowing some creatures of a day in the immensity of space and time. Descartes can elude this question less than any other philosopher. For it is one of his principles that extension is the essence of matter. By this he expressly understands that matter with all its modes and qualities, is included in extension. Hence it follows that there is matter wherever there is extension; *i. e.*, length, breadth, and depth. Hence it is evident that we cannot ask if there is a *vacuum* beyond the universe. For this would be to ask if there is extension beyond extension. The only question is to know whether matter or extension can, or cannot, be conceived as finite? For to conceive extensions ever vaster

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, § 36.

and vaster, you will see that there is necessarily always something beyond. Imagine an immense globe. This globe, from the moment that it has limits, is bounded by a yet greater expansion which surrounds it, and without which it would not exist. Hence it follows that the Cartesian world is necessarily infinite in extent. And Descartes has clearly seen this consequence. But in his book of *Principles* he has tried to soften down its expression. He there says, the extension of the world is *indefinite*. Why *indefinite*, and not *infinite*? Because we must reserve the word *infinite* for God. God alone is absolutely infinite, inasmuch as He possesses all perfection, without any possible limit. The material universe is only infinite in a relative and determinate way. And who can say whether this impossibility of conceiving limits to the universe does not proceed from the impotence of our understanding, rather than from the nature of things? Descartes speaks thus in his book on *Principles*. But, in his letters, he emancipates himself from all the qualifications dictated by prudence. He jeers at those who *confine the work of God in a ball*;<sup>1</sup> and broadly states that a finite world is, in his opinion, a contradiction.<sup>2</sup>

But the debate grows. An illustrious and unexpected correspondent enters upon the scene; Queen Christina, in person, wishes to know what to think, not only of the extension of the world, but also of its duration, and, in general, of its greatness. If the world is infinite in extension,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to M. de Chanut, x. p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Henry More, x. p. 241.

Is the universe infinite in duration, and in creatures? Authority of Doctors.

why not in duration? why not also in the number of its creatures?

Descartes begins by removing every scruple which piety might suggest. He appeals to a certain number of doctors of the Church, among others to the subtle and profound Nicholas de Cusa; "I remember," says he, "that Cardinal de Cusa, and many other doctors, have supposed the world infinite, without having ever been called to account by the Church on this subject. On the contrary, it is believed, that to conceive God's works as infinitely grand, is to honour God."<sup>1</sup>

The universe in a certain sense imperishable.

We may, then, without scruple of conscience, conceive the universe as a limitless extension, peopled with innumerable globes. Shall we say that the duration of the world is illimitable in the past as in the future? Descartes has no doubt of the future; and he easily satisfies Queen Christina: for the Faith teaches us that earth and heaven shall pass away, that is to say, shall undergo a mutation of form; but the worlds, in the sense of the matter of which these are composed, shall never perish. The proof is, that the Christian faith promises our bodies an eternal life after the Resurrection.

Eternity of the universe à *partie anté*, doubtful.

But does the limitless duration of the world, on the side of the past, follow from its imperishable existence in the future? It does not; and that, according to Descartes, because the portions of duration are not mutually dependent. The world of to-day is not related to the world of yesterday, as one certain portion of extension is

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, x. p. 46.

related to the extension which environs it. The terrestrial globe cannot exist without its encircling space, whilst the present duration of the universe is not a necessary result of its past, and does not imply its future duration. So that, even if the illimitable duration of the world in the future is indubitable, its illimitable duration in the past is but barely possible.

It is so with the number of creatures. God could scatter an illimitable number of intelligent beings in the immensity of the heavens. Has he done so? We know not; but it is extremely probable, and we have the advantage of seeing the authority of revelation coincide with that of science. "When Holy Scripture speaks of the innumerable company of angels, in divers passages, it completely confirms this opinion. And astronomers confirm it also, who, upon measuring the magnitude of the stars, find them much greater than the earth. For if, from the infinite extension of the world, we infer that it should have inhabitants on a different scale from the earth, we may infer it also from the extension which all the astronomers attribute to it, inasmuch as there is not one of them who does not judge that the earth is smaller in comparison with the entire heaven, than one grain of sand in comparison with a mountain."<sup>1</sup>

The material grandeur of the universe, the moral grandeur of intelligent beings, the infinite grandeur of God, combine in assuring us that the universe possesses all possible extension and perfection. "When we love God, and by Him join

The number of creatures is possibly illimitable.

A nobler adoration of God results from this doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, x. p. 52.

ourselves in intention with all the things which He has created, the grander, the nobler, the more perfect we conceive them to be, the more fully we appreciate ourselves, for we feel that we are parts of a more finished whole; and the more cause we have to praise God, on account of the immensity of His works."

God and  
the Cosmos  
according  
to Des-  
cartes.

Here, then, according to Descartes, is the Cosmos, and the God who is above it. There is a perfect and infinite God, self-sufficing in the eternal possession of His infinite perfections. In virtue of an act of absolute liberty, of a sovereign act, which has no reason but itself, there exists a creation of inexhaustible grandeur, variety, and fecundity, which Divine omnipotence preserves from hour to hour by the same act which created it. On one side is the world of bodies, perfectly one in its indefinite extension, made from one sole matter, moved and divided in a thousand ways, from which all the marvels of the heavens, all the forms of organization and of life, spring by the simple laws of motion alone. And side by side with this material universe is the world of spirits, peopled by an immense variety of intelligent beings, who have all one and the same essence, *thought*, as all bodies have one common basis, *extension*. These are superior beings, whose life it is to think, and who only act upon bodies accidentally, capable as they are with the Divine assistance of changing the direction of this or that movement, but unable to augment or diminish the absolute quantity of motion once for all allotted to the universe.

What is the part of man in this immense uni-

verse? On his material side, man is nothing, or <sup>Man not at best very little.</sup> He is a frail and petty mode <sup>the final end of creation.</sup> of that infinite extension, and it needs all his ignorance and all his pride to imagine that these countless globes have been made for him. It is only too evident that man is not the centre of the visible universe, and to speak generally, it is no mark of wisdom to enquire for what end God has formed such or such a creature. The true title of man's greatness is his thought, which makes him like the Divine mind. For if the soul is present to the body, it is so not by its essence, but by its action, as God is present to the immensity of His works, not by physical extension, but by His power.

The actions of the soul are free and voluntary, <sup>Voluntary actions.</sup> and this is another point of resemblance to God: for there is in the human will something infinite. "The understanding only extends to those few objects which are presented to it, and its knowledge is always very limited; on the contrary, the will may in some sense appear infinite, because we perceive nothing which can be the object of any other will, even of that immense one which is in God, to which ours may not extend also."<sup>1</sup>

We feel this will to be free, and if any reasoner <sup>Free-will consistent with pre-ordination.</sup> demands the proof, Descartes answers: "That the liberty of our will is known without proof by the sole experience that we have of it." But, it may be said, we know also that God must have pre-ordained all things by a sovereign act. Descartes replies that our thought is finite, and the omnipotence of God infinite. "And this it is

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, Part I. 35.

which brings it to pass that we have understanding enough to know clearly and distinctly that this power is in God, while we have not enough to comprehend His extension in such sense as to be able to know how it leaves the actions of men entirely free and undetermined. Hence, on the other side, we are so fully assured of the liberty and of the indifference which is in us, that there is nothing which we know more clearly, so that this omnipotence of God should not hinder us from believing it. For we should be wrong to doubt that of which we have an interior aperception, and which we know by experience to exist in us, because we do not understand another thing which we know to be incomprehensible by its very nature."<sup>1</sup>

Man's  
power  
limited,  
except in  
virtue.

If the will of man is free and unlimited, his power is very narrow. The soul is like a stranger in the body. It cannot change its constitution, nor do anything more than modify a little the direction of its motions. Health, riches, honour, power, in short, all outward goods, are never completely in our power. One thing only in the world always depends upon ourselves, and that is the resolution to do that which is in accordance with right reason. Here is virtue, here also is the only true happiness possible here below.

Immor-  
tality of  
man.

What is to become of man at death? His soul is naturally immortal; for it is not subject to those changing configurations which make it necessary for every corporeal organisation to perish, in so far as it is a mode of extension. More than this; the soul is by its essence a thing which *thinks*,

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, Part I. 41.

and it is a part of its nature to think *always*. Far from being linked to the body by a necessary relation, the soul has no natural connection with it, being of a totally different essence. Their union is a sort of miracle, which cannot be conceived as existing without Divine assistance. When, therefore, the body perishes, the soul is not struck, but on the contrary emancipated and restored to itself.

Is, then, this immortality absolutely necessary and certain? It is not necessary; for the future duration of the soul follows naturally, but not necessarily from its present duration; all depends upon the will of God which is impenetrable.<sup>1</sup> Hence a doubt which Descartes does not hesitate to confide to his illustrious friend, the Princess Elizabeth: "As for the state of the soul after this life, I have much less acquaintance with it than Digby:<sup>2</sup> for, putting aside what faith teaches us, I confess that on the footing of natural reason alone, we may make many conjectures in our own favour, and entertain beautiful hopes, but *not one assurance*."<sup>3</sup> This hope is sufficient to exempt the sage from the fear of death, while it prevents him from wishing for it; for there always is more good than evil in this life. There is one especial good, the most excellent of all, which only depends upon ourselves,—good will, and this gives us a serenity of soul superior to the most envied enjoyments.

Here then is the utterance of philosophy, as the interpreter of reason enlightened by evidence.

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to P. Mersenne*, viii., p. 431.

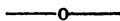
<sup>2</sup> An English Roman Catholic gentleman, author of a work on the Immortality of the Soul.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres*, ix., p. 369. Cf., *Passions de l'ame*, iv., p. 209.

Immortality a "guess" without Revelation.



Where the evidence ceases, reason stops short. Above it is revelation, which speaks in the name of faith. On one side are the natural verities which can be conceived and demonstrated; on the other, those supernatural truths, which escape the understanding, and are founded upon exterior tradition and authority. To treat of them, one should be invested with a higher mission; but thank God that the way to heaven is open to all, be they learned or ignorant in the science of theology.



## DOUBTS AND OBJECTIONS.

Strong  
points in  
the Carte-  
sian Philo-  
sophy.

Such, then, are the thoughts and conjectures of Descartes upon divine things. Unquestionably these views are imposing, if not always by their solidity, at least by their grandeur and boldness. I admire especially this simple and natural demonstration of the existence of God, in which the mind rises from the consciousness of its own imperfection to the idea of the all-perfect Being. I also note carefully the excellent rule which Descartes lays down for every one who wishes to conceive the attributes of the Divinity,<sup>1</sup> viz., to suppose nothing in His essence, but those things which can be conceived as perfect, and to eliminate everything which implies any imperfection. All this is simple, lucid, strongly connected, and thoroughly satisfactory. But when I come to consider the particular views of Descartes upon the perfections of God, and the relations of the Creator with the world and with men, when I endeavour to link his

<sup>1</sup> [This is really borrowed from Aquinas.—Art. i., Quest. xiv.]

thoughts and to follow out their consequences, find that they do not form a homogeneous whole. I believe that I can detect the conflict of contrary thoughts and tendencies.

Descartes evidently intended to demonstrate a God radically distinct from the world, containing in Himself all the power of beings, conceived in their full expansion—a God who is self-sufficient and freely creates the universe, who is an intelligence, a thought in possession of itself, a Person.

Descartes in intention is religious and Theistic.

I cannot doubt this when I read in his *Meditations* this definition of God:<sup>1</sup> “By the name of God I mean a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, omnipotent, by which both I and all other things which exist have been created and produced.”<sup>2</sup> I cannot doubt it, when I hear him laying it down as the essential characteristic of the Divinity, that He needs not aspire to anything better, like finite creatures; from whence it follows that He possesses wisdom and happiness not potentially but actually, that He is not subject to an indefinite development but possesses an immutable plenitude, that He is in short the perfect Being enjoying His perfection.<sup>3</sup> I cannot doubt it when I read over one of those simply and deeply religious pages, where Descartes delights himself in contemplating God as the supreme object of adoration and love. “It seems to me very reasonable,” he says, in closing his third Meditation, “to pause here some time in the contemplation of this all-perfect God: to weigh in deep leisure His marvellous attributes:

<sup>1</sup> [For the objection to this expression see above. Note, page 36.]

<sup>2</sup> *Meditations*, I. p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* I. p. 289.

to consider, to admire, and to adore the incomparable beauty of this immense light, at least as much as the strength of my mind, which remains in some sort dazzled with its resplendence, will permit. For as faith teaches us that the crowning happiness of the other life consists only in the contemplation of the Divine Majesty, so we feel by experience even here that a like meditation, though beyond comparison less perfect, makes us enjoy the fullest contentment which we are capable of tasting in this life."

Yet some Cartesian theories are of a Pantheistic tendency.

God, in the system of Descartes, is consequently Personal, and nothing can be further from his thoughts than the indeterminate God of Pantheism, which he certainly would have rejected with energy. Indeed his mind is so little taken with it, that he is not even at the pains to repudiate it. And yet, when I consider certain theories of Descartes in themselves, apart from his intentions, I cannot conceal from myself that unknown to their author, and against his will, they may be made to favour Pantheism.

Two radically different methods in his demonstration of God.

In his demonstration of the existence of God there is a kind of struggle between two opposite methods. All his reasonings, indeed, appear to have a common basis, the idea of the perfect Being; but this resemblance is only in form. Fundamentally, there are two radically different demonstrations, that of the third Meditation, which sets out from a fact of consciousness, and that of the fifth, which sets out from an abstract conception. The former, according to Descartes' own expression,<sup>1</sup> proves God by His effects, that is by

<sup>1</sup> *Réponse aux premières objections*, I. p. 395.

the image of Himself which He has engraved on our soul, raising itself from the image to the archetype, from the effect to the cause. The latter, neglecting effects and realities, pretends to grasp by reason alone the essence or nature of God, and from thence to deduce His existence. Pass on from the third to the fifth Meditation. We do not find there a man who looks into himself to ascertain the truth, who first assures himself of his own thought and of his proper existence, and then, finding this thought uncertain, fallible, limited, and imperfect, ascends towards the ideal of finished thought, of stainless perfection, and of self-existence. Instead of this natural and spontaneous movement of a soul which seeks after God, I find a geometer who reasons upon general axioms and abstract definitions, or rather a scholastic philosopher, practised in the refinements of abstraction, in the quips and cranks of the art of reasoning, and who pretends to make a Being start from a definition, the concrete from the abstract, the real from the possible.

One, natural and spontaneous, rising from a fact of consciousness; the other, abstract and geometrical.

And here, I think, I can distinctly detect the trace of a struggle, which can be found over and over again through the whole course of the subsequent speculations of Descartes. I mean, the struggle between the spirit of abstract speculation, and the spirit of observation. In reading his works over in the order in which he composed them, I can follow the progress of this struggle. The *Discourse upon Method* contains all the proofs of the existence of God, which are to be developed at a later period in the *Meditations*. But abstract reasoning has almost no place there,

and a profound observation of human consciousness is its predominant characteristic. In the *Meditations*, an attentive eye detects a marked change. Geometrical demonstration, standing entirely by itself, has no longer the most distant connection with consciousness, and with real life.

In the *Principes*, full swing is given to this spirit of geometry, and I cannot perceive the slightest vestige of the spirit of observation. It is a most remarkable fact that Descartes, who there sums up all his proofs of the existence of God, places the mathematical demonstration in the first rank. Thus, the proof which is hardly exhibited in the *Discourse upon Method*, which in the *Meditations* is relegated to the lowest place, and introduced almost fortuitously, becomes finally the fundamental proof, of which all the rest are but accessories.<sup>1</sup>

Geometric spirit hardens the fact of consciousness into a syllogism.

The *Principes*, in general, present the spectacle of the complete triumph of the geometrical spirit. So much so, that the *cogito, ergo sum*, the starting point, or rather the vital spirit of the philosophy of Descartes, completely loses its character. It is no longer a fact of consciousness; it is a conclusion—Descartes says it in so many words, the conclusion of a syllogism whose major premiss can only be this, *Nothing has no quality*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Compare an interesting passage in Pascal, in which he contrasts *l'esprit de géométrie* with *l'esprit de finesse* (translated by Sir W. Hamilton, *the spirit of observation*), and traces the causes of the superiority of the latter, outside the field of mathematics, *Pensées*, Part I., art. 10, sect. 2. It should be remembered, that the influence of Descartes as a metaphysician, and the ascendancy of his philosophical speculations, arose, in the first instance, from his eminence as a mathematician and physical philosopher. This will account for his feeling more secure with the geometrical armour which he had so often proved.]

<sup>2</sup> *Principes*, Part I., 11 and 52.

Thus has all this grand and simple philosophy been changed, or rather, thus has its spirit been extinguished and evaporated. To establish our personal existence, we must have a syllogism; for the existence of God, a syllogism; for the existence of bodies, syllogisms again. But this is an impotent geometry, a barren co-acervation of abstractions, which can never give an atom of reality, of motion, and of life.

If this excess of geometric method had been confined to obscuring some simple truths, by overwhelming them with useless processes of reasoning, the evil would not have been irreparable. But while Descartes substitutes abstract and geometrical conceptions for the intuitions of consciousness, he appears to me also to have a manifest tendency to efface in all beings the principle of activity, which constitutes their essence and their life.

It is this which renders so dangerous his theory, at first sight innocent enough, that the conservation of the creatures is a continuous creation. If Descartes meant to say that the act of creation and the act of preservation are in God but one sole and the same act, let the assertion be granted. But he goes further. He seems to believe that there is in every creature an actual deficit of being, which calls at every instant for a divine *Fiat*. This idea appears to me peculiarly important, and peculiarly dangerous, when I ask myself, to what corporeal substance and spiritual substance are reduced by Descartes.

When Descartes analyses the faculties of the soul, as a psychological observer, he distinguishes

This danger evinced by considering Descartes' reduction of spiritual and corporeal substance to *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

the *will*, which is essentially active, from the *understanding*, which is passive, and places in the will the seat of moral liberty and responsibility. He even maintains that the will, far from being finite, like the understanding, which only embraces a determinate number of objects, is in some sort infinite, as being able to direct itself towards a number of unlimited objects. From this disproportion between the understanding and the will arises the possible abuse of the latter; and here is the root of evil, and of all our faults.<sup>1</sup>

There might be much to say upon these psychological views; but, at all events, the essential features of the human soul are not much distorted in them; on the contrary, when Descartes loses sight of consciousness, and gives himself up to the demon of geometry, in place of the living and active *Ego*, which is conscious of its unity in the free development of its powers, is substituted the dead and abstract conception of thinking substance, *res cogitans*. And this is the exact counterpart of another conception, on which the whole physical philosophy of Descartes rests, I mean the conception of extended substance, *res extensa*.

Descartes teaches that every substance has one principal attribute, and that that of the soul is *thought*, as *extension* is that of the body.<sup>2</sup> How are we to distinguish these two sorts of substances, body and soul? By one and the same process, namely, by deducing the substance from the knowledge which we have of its attributes.

<sup>1</sup> *Méditations*, i. p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Principes*, Part I., p. 53.

"*Because,*" he says, "one of our *common notions* is, that *nothing* cannot have any attributes, properties, or qualities; *therefore,* when we meet any one, we have reason to conclude that he is the attribute of some substance, and that this substance exists."

Thus, we are in the open sea of logic and geometry, very far from the world of realities. Nothing can be more artificial, and more contrary to all the *data* of observation, than this systematic transformation of the soul and the body into two abstract types, thinking substance and extended substance. What, in fact, are bodies according to Descartes? Does he give that name to the objects of the senses, and, as the ancients said, to *sensible things*? Not at all. He arbitrarily eliminates all the sensible qualities of bodies, under the pretence that they are obscure, not only heat, colour, and the like, but even solidity, without which, bodies would be to us as if they did not exist. He then declares that the only real qualities of matter are its mathematical qualities, that is, extension, form, divisibility, and motion. But there is no difficulty in reducing all these qualities by analysis to one, *extension*. For form is only the limit of extension; motion, a change of relations within extension; and divisibility, a logical consequence of extension. Extension is, therefore, the entire being of bodies. But extension excludes all idea of force and action. Thus, by a course of arbitrary mutilations, and by analyses of a factitious rigour, the material world is reduced to a passive and inert extension, destitute of all energy, and incapable



of giving itself the least motion. We have no longer that rich and glorious universe which our senses show us, full of variety, activity, and life; but a mathematical conception, a pure abstraction.

The *res extensa* plus the *res cogitans*, pushed a little further—  
Pantheism. Has Descartes sold the activity of the human soul as cheap? Fortunately not. Here the spirit of observation has been stronger than the systematic spirit; and Descartes has always reserved the rights of the will, and liberty. But some less sensible and more logical intellect may arise which, effacing the unsubstantial distinction between the understanding, conceived as finite, and the will conceived as infinite, shall refer the will to the understanding, the understanding to a series of passive thoughts, and define the human soul by “a collection of modes of thought,” as Descartes has defined body by “a collection of modes of extension.” So completely will this be done, that it will only remain for him to assign as the common basis of all these ephemeral modes, *the sole and universal substance*.

Connected with his strange view of arbitrary will. This fatal disposition to efface the natural activity of all creatures, and consequently to exaggerate Divine omnipotence, explains to my mind that strange paradox of Descartes, that God enjoys absolute liberty to such a degree, that truth and right depend upon the will of God.

This system, taken by itself and rigorously, is encumbered by manifest difficulties, and, indeed, absurdities. If truth and right depend upon the Divine will, they have no longer an absolute character. And what is this Divine will? A

will which is arbitrary, and necessarily indifferent, since it is prior to all truth and right. This will is caprice—it is chance.

To say that all beings in this world depend upon the free will of God is solid and true; for there is nothing necessary in the existence of these beings. But to say that this will is absolutely arbitrary and indifferent, that it acts without any motive of wisdom or of goodness; to assert that the existence of the world does not arise from the fact that God deemed it better to create it than to leave it in nothingness; but that God, having created it without any motive, it is better, from that time on, that it should than that it should not exist: this surely is to pledge oneself to a doubtful position. What else is it than to maintain that if the circle has equal radii it is because God has so willed, and to represent God as deciding by an act of His will that two and two make four? Is not this the strangest of conceptions? Is it even serious? For, in fact, if the will of God makes truth, it must also make being. We must then go so far as to assert that the very being of God is posterior to His will; that He freely determined to exist; that He could have decided not to exist;—which precipitates one into a very abyss of extravagances.

This excess of absurdity in so sensible a philosopher as Descartes is calculated to inspire some mistrust. One says to oneself that there must be a mistake here; and, in fact, the paradox of Descartes is explained, unless I am mistaken, by his views upon liberty in man and in God.

Descartes has always and thoroughly inclined

Extravagance of this view of arbitrary will.

Descartes' views on Divine and human liberty his *πρώτον ψεύδος*.

Confuses  
will and  
intellect.

to confound two things which are profoundly distinct—the understanding and the will. It is his express doctrine that these are identical in the Divine essence. “In God,” he says, “to will and to know is one.” And elsewhere: “To will, to understand, and to create, is one and the same thing in God, without precedence of any one, *ne quidem ratione*.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, to say that eternal truths, or the essences of things, depend on the will of God, is tantamount to saying that they have their origin and foundation in the Divine intellect. To say that without an act of God’s will there would be neither truth nor falsehood, neither good nor evil, is to say that if God were not there would be nothing.

Wrong  
conclusion  
that the  
will of God  
has no rule.

Descartes, then, is triumphantly in the right when he affirms that there is “nothing the truth of which precedes the knowledge which God has of it;” and when he adds, “We cannot say that these truths would exist, even if God were not; for God is the first and the most eternal of all possible truths, and the sole truth whence all others proceed.” I agree with this; but from the fact that truth has its foundation in the Divine nature, does it follow that the will of God has no rule, or that the beautiful and the good depend upon an arbitrary decree? Evidently not.

Second  
great error.

We come to a second mistake. When acute theologians reproach Descartes with having said that indifference is the lowest degree of liberty, he protests that he only wished to speak of the human will, and has all the air of maintaining the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vi., p. 368.

perfect indifference of the Divine liberty. But we must not be duped by appearances. If will in God does not differ from intelligence, the Divine will is no more undetermined than the Divine understanding, which again is no more undetermined than the being of God. Descartes, then, is an indeterminist only in words; and if he could or would have explained himself directly, he would have maintained that in God as in man, indifference is not the characteristic of liberty.

And here comes out one of the gravest defects in the psychology of the *Meditations*. From want of a sufficiently close observation of the consciousness, Descartes does not know the nature of the will. He constantly confounds it with that which it is not, sometimes identifying it with the judgment and sometimes with desire.<sup>1</sup> This is a double error, pregnant with evil consequences. We are no more masters of our judgments than of our desires, and the peculiar characteristic of the will is to be free. By it we exercise a certain degree of influence upon our judgments and desires; it alone is its own possessor, and depends only upon itself.

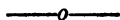
I cannot help thinking that before grappling with the dark and difficult problem of the Divine liberty, Descartes should have deeply studied the character of human liberty, and have remembered his own method, which consists in ascending from human nature to the Divine nature, to transfer to the Creator all in the creature which is marked with the character of perfection. Nor should he have flung himself alternately into the contrary

<sup>1</sup> Comp. *Meditations*, I., p. 267; and *Principes*, Part I., p. 32.

extremes of an indifferent and capricious liberty which is like chance, and of a will so determined by the understanding that it has lost the independence in which it consists. Instead of this, finding will in man, finding it free, linked to the understanding which enlightens, to the goodness which counsels, to the love which inspires it, he should have conceived it in God with these marks, only purified from all limitation. Thus he would have left no doubt upon his real meaning, no cloud upon the absolute character of eternal verities, no shadow upon human and Divine liberty ; and, in short, among so many sublime views and profound truths, he would not have let fall some seeds of fatalism.

## Second Treatise.

### *God in the System of Malebranche.*



I HAVE consulted Descartes upon divine things, and when I endeavour to give myself an account of my impressions, I am forced to confess to myself that the great philosopher has not satisfied me, except upon points of which I was already convinced. It is true that I have in my consciousness the idea of the Perfect, of the Infinite; or, in the language of this day, of the Absolute. It is true again that this idea represents something real, the Being of beings, the eternal source of all things. I have little hesitation about all this. But what is this Absolute, this First Principle? Is He an intelligible and adorable being, or an enigma, a blind power or providence? This is what I should have wished to learn from Descartes. But whilst I was meditating upon the brief answers which fell from his lips, I felt the luminous image of God the Creator obscured in my wavering intellect by the undefined phantoms of Pantheism. To give stability to my thoughts, I am about to turn to the two men who are considered to have understood Descartes best; I shall read Malebranche and Spinoza. These are two

Descartes  
is unsatis-  
factory.

Male-  
branche  
and Spino-  
za, the  
great pupils  
of Des-  
cartes.

Male-  
branche a  
man of two  
books—a  
Christian  
or Augus-  
tinian Car-  
tesian.

recluse and meditative minds, unknown to one another, who have set out from the same spot, to separate almost immediately, and always occupied with their own than with any other speculations.

I shall first visit Malebranche among the Brothers of the Oratory, or in the quiet retreat of Raray. He has two books constantly open before him, Descartes and Saint Augustine. His life is occupied in meditating upon them. He knows nothing of distractions, except some childlike amusements. Gentle and self-collected, only belonging to this gross world by a meagre and attenuated frame, his only joy and passion is to reflect.

When he had come to twenty-six years of age, he was still groping his way. A book by Descartes one day fell into his hands. He read it, and from that day forth belonged to the new spirit. Let us look at a man who renounces erudition, Hebrew, and criticism, in which he had made some essays by virtue of his religious obedience, and who, willing from henceforth to know no more historically than had sufficed Adam, seeks all his light from the clear and distinct ideas of his reason. He is a metaphysician and a geometer : he is a Cartesian. But Cartesian and reasoner as he is, he is at the same time pre-eminently a Christian, not merely a Christian by education and habit, but a Christian who is spiritual and fervent even to mysticism. Thus he cannot understand why his master, Descartes, wished to draw an insurmountable line of demarcation between reason and faith, between philosophy and theology. For his part, his Christianity and his Cartesianism are one. He finds in the lights of his reason a revelation of the obscurities

of the faith, and in the revealed dogmas the key to the profoundest mysteries of nature. He makes no pretensions to innovate. His philosophy is that of Descartes, his theology that of Saint Augustine. His sole object is to unite them, to make of Saint Augustine and of Descartes one only philosopher, one mind, and one heart. On this his energies were concentrated: this was his life-work, the secret of that unparalleled intermixture of candour and rashness, of subtlety and enthusiasm, which make him so interesting, amiable, and original.

The fact that Cartesianism disentangles our spirits from the chains of the corporeal world, and teaches us to assign but little place to the objects of sense, is the point which first of all won Malebranche. When men commence to reflect, they imagine that the bodies which surround us are the clearest, most accessible, most real and certain objects in the universe. This is a pure illusion, according to Descartes; nothing at bottom is more obscure or less substantial. There is nothing clear but ideas, nothing real but the objects of the intelligible world. There is no true light but the light of reason which shines down into the lowest deeps of the soul.

Descartes saw very clearly that the most striking phenomena of the physical world are in themselves profoundly unknown, and, so far as we are concerned, are reduced to sensations. What in itself is the heat which comes from this fire-place? I do not know, and all that I do know is the impression which I receive. The point of a needle pricks my hand, and makes me utter an exclamation.

Malebranche attracted to Cartesianism by the small place which sensible objects hold in that system.

Phenomena unknown in themselves.



tion of pain: where is this pain? Not in the insensible needle, nor in I know not what nerves of the injured organ; the pain is in me; it is a mode of my inner being. And in the same way, those colours that appear to deck earth and heaven, those glittering rays, those wafting perfumes, those ringing sounds, are nothing else than my sentient being projected outwards by an inveterate and habitual delusion.

Extension  
with its  
modes the  
only reality  
in sensible  
objects.

What then is there which is clear and really known in sensible objects? Extension, form and motion, nothing more: for this alone is independent of our sensations; this alone is capable of absolute determination and precise knowledge. But what are all possible forms, except the different limits which extension may receive? Are not rest and motion reduced to relations of distance, that is to say, to accidents of extension? The corporeal world fundamentally and essentially is comprised in extension with its modes. But extension, thus taken in itself, and freed from our deceptive impressions, is no more a sensible but an intelligible thing. It is an idea; it belongs to the understanding, to the pure intellect.

The senses consequently have nothing to tell us upon the nature and essence of bodies; they can only inform us in what respects these bodies can be agreeable or disagreeable, useful or noxious to us. They minister to the necessities of material life, and have no business to interfere with the superior requirements of science. Science lives by light. It is composed of ideas. It only listens to reason.

Let us consult reason. Does it assure us of

the actual existence of bodies? By no means.<sup>1</sup> Reason cannot assure us of the actual existence of bodies. It tells us that there is an idea of bodies, the idea of extension with all the modes by which it can be diversified. But this idea does not imply actual existence. Otherwise, it must be maintained that the material universe is as necessary as God, and that it exists by virtue of its own essence. But it is not so. The idea of the material universe only represents a possible extension, which is capable of an infinitude of forms and motions. Does this extension exist objectively? This reason can never demonstrate. Descartes perfectly understood this. He did not hesitate to declare that the existence of bodies is not self-evident, and cannot be demonstrated by the idea which we have of them. Only, he believed that he had found another mode of demonstration by resting upon the truth of God, who would mock us, he said, if we were deceived by our senses. Descartes was mistaken: for God communicates with us naturally by reason, and reason, far from inviting us to believe in our senses, warns us that they have been altered and corrupted since sin

<sup>1</sup> [Some Oxford readers of this section may happen to recollect a certain sermon on "The Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine," preached in St. Mary's Church on the Feast of the Purification, 1843. That sermon was remarkable for more reasons than one. It was the last ever delivered in that pulpit by its admired author. It contained within itself two spirits, yet at war—the spirit of the most audacious Pyrrhonism, and the spirit of unlimited submission to the most unlimited dogmatism. Here are the two currents that have drifted some splendid wrecks of Oxford intellect to every shore of thought, from Romanism to Positivism. But I can only signalize here the exact Malebranchism of one of the strangest passages in that strange sermon—"What if the properties of matter, as we conceive of them, are merely relative to us? And should any one fear lest such thoughts as these should tend to a dreary and hopeless Scepticism, let him take into account the Being and Providence of God," &c.—*Newman's University Sermons*, p. 350.]

entered into the world, and commands us to mistrust them.<sup>1</sup>

If then we were reduced to the light of nature, if we did not know from a superior source that God has deigned to give existence to extension and motion, we should consider the corporeal

<sup>1</sup> [It is sad to see how sophistically some pious persons will argue in defence of propositions which every believing Christian must accept, while he has the ungracious task of pointing out weaknesses in the position of his own friends. Thus, in an otherwise admirable sermon on the Doctrine of the Atonement by Professor Heurtley, preached before the University of Oxford, the objection to the Atonement, founded on its alleged contrariety to man's "moral sense," is answered by an allegation against man's moral nature identical with that which Malebranche urges against man's senses. "Is it that moral sense, or moral nature, which man had before the fall? But if it be that which he has had since the fall, how shall we be safe in trusting to 'such' a rule?" And, again, apparently on this ground, we are told that we must receive doctrines which "*contradict our natural sense of what is fit or unfit, right or wrong.*" I confess that I must hold with Butler: "Reason can and it ought to judge of the morality of Revelation. It is the province of reason to judge of the morality, whether it contains things plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice, or goodness. . . Reason is the only faculty we have, wherewith to judge concerning anything, even Revelation itself"—*Analogy*, Part II. C. 3, cf. cv. *ad finem*. It is instructive to remark how Professor Heurtley, forgetting his paradox, afterwards states of this doctrine, at variance with man's "moral nature since the fall," that "it gives us an exalted idea of God," and cites analogies drawn from our being as "framed originally in His own image," forgetting that the analogy should, according to himself, lose all propriety since the fall. Dr. Heurtley quotes Dr. Pusey, who maintains that reason, "since the fall," is no true guide. "But then what reason (will not conflict with faith)? Reason such as Adam had it before the fall. That poor blinded prisoner, majestic in its wreck, bearing still the lineaments of its primeval beauty and giant might, yet doomed, until it be set free, to grind in the mill of its prison-house, and make sport for the master to whom it is enslaved; this which cannot guide itself, is no guide into the mind of God."—*Dr. Pusey's Sermon "All Faith the Gift of God,"* P. 16. I am insensible neither to the convincing power of Dr. Heurtley's general argument, nor to the exquisite beauty and touching piety of Dr. Pusey's language; but I cannot help preferring one of Butler's golden sentences, "*not vilifying the faculty of reason, which is the candle of the Lord within us.*"—*Analogy*, Part II. conclusion. One curious development of this mode of reasoning is noticed by Bishop Fitzgerald. The great argument of Butler's analogy has been condemned on the ground that the constitution and course of nature has been so mutilated and dislocated since the fall as to leave no valid points for the analogy between it and religion, natural and revealed.—*Life of Butler*, p. lxxxviii.]

world as purely possible, and affirm nothing about its reality.

You will tell me perhaps that you are certain at least of the existence of your own body, since you can move it. This again is an illusion. The patient, whose arm has been amputated, believes that he feels pain in it. Who has not traversed boundless spaces in his dreams, while remaining without motion in his bed? Let us expel these uncertain impressions, sometimes true and sometimes false, and only believe infallible reason. It will tell us that the soul is a thinking substance, and the body an extended substance, and that between thought and extension there is no conceivable communication. And so Descartes has not hesitated to confess that the soul, without Divine assistance, would be incapable of influencing the movements of the body. This assistance is not sufficient; for the action of body upon soul and of soul upon body, is not only difficult to understand and beyond the will of man: it is repugnant to the nature of things, it is in itself impossible.

The power of moving the body no proof of its existence, and may be an illusion.

Besides, how can the soul be mistress of the bodily motions, when it cannot determine its own modifications? Just as in extended substance all may be reduced to form and motion, so in thinking substance all may be reduced to the perceptions of the understanding and the inclinations of the will. The soul receives various perceptions, as the body receives various forms, and is directed to certain objects, just as the body is moved in such and such directions. It is not the body which bestows upon itself its own form and motion—it

receives them from without; nor can the soul change the order of its thoughts, which is regulated by the universal laws of reason, nor the course of its inclinations, which depends upon the primitive law of good inherent in its essence, and the supreme law of all sensible and intelligent beings.

The power  
of the will  
is extreme-  
ly limited.

What then can our will do? Alas! only one thing, to deceive itself and to fail—that is to cause the strength which we have received for the purpose of loving all goods according to their relative excellence, to rest upon an inferior good. We love to attribute to ourselves an unlimited power over nature and ourselves. This is because we scarcely know ourselves. Our soul has not properly the idea of itself. It does not see itself in its archetype, it merely feels itself. Had we the idea of thinking substance, as we have that of number or extension, we should know of what modifications the human soul is capable as clearly as we know what an even number or a spherical figure is; we should have a clear and distinct notion of pain, volition, free-will, all things of which we have only a confused sentiment. Strange and humiliating condition! We know the body better than the soul, in this sense, that we know body in general by the idea or archetype which represents it, while we only know the soul by a sentiment.

Our only  
definite  
knowledge,  
that we  
have ideas.

What then do we definitely know, condemned as we are to distrust our senses, our imagination, our very consciousness? We know that there are ideas, that these ideas are the immutable rule of our thoughts, that in attaching ourselves to them we are in truth, light, and order, and that

as soon as these ideas become obscure for us, we are nothing but trouble, error, ignorance, disorder and confusion.

What then are these ideas? They are not <sup>What are ideas?</sup> forms of our being. For we are changing, and they are immutable. We are subject to error, and they are infallible. We are full of mistiness, and they are radiant with light. We are finite and imperfect, and they all, in their own manner, express infinity and perfection. They rule while they enlighten our feeble reason. In their immutable essence, in their eternal and necessary interdependence, they constitute reason itself, universal reason, the truth.

Have reason and truth nothing above them? <sup>God above ideas. No intermediary idea between us and Him.</sup> Are they not linked to an ultimate principle, which is God? Doubtless. For, in the first place, all which is immutable and eternal is, by the very force of the term, divine. Then we find in our soul the thought of the Infinite Being; not only of the infinite in some sense or other, but of the infinitely infinite Being. What is the object of that thought? Shall we say that it is the idea or archetype of the Infinite? But that is something more, it is the Infinite Himself. Let us consider it more carefully. There cannot properly be an idea of the infinite. For every idea expresses a particular being. The idea of number expresses all numbers possible, nothing more. The idea of a circle expresses all imaginable circles, nothing else. The idea of extension enfolds an infinity of figures and motions, but it is always nothing more than the idea of extension. But the Infinite Being is the being who excludes all par-

ticularity, who encloses all existence in himself. Therefore no idea can represent the Infinite Being. He is Himself His own idea<sup>1</sup>—which means that between Him and human thought there can be no intermediary. If we think of Him, He must exist. But in fact we think of the Infinite Being. We have, it is true, but an obscure and finite view, but we see Him as infinite. And as we cannot see Him by the intermediation of an idea, it follows that we see Him immediately in Himself.

Seeing all  
things in  
God.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, is called the idea of the Infinite is God Himself discovering Himself to man. We see God, and in Him we see all things. For the Infinite Being is infinitely intelligent. He is reason and truth itself. In the unity of His being He embraces all essences, all ideas, the eternal archetypes of all things. Each idea is, properly, only the being of God in so far as it can be communicated to such or such a class of objects. The idea of extension, for instance, is God in so far as He can communicate to finite beings anything of His intelligible extension. And so with all other ideas. God, then, Himself placed above all ideas, embraces them eternally in His essence, where He sees and contemplates them eternally. This is the permanent dialogue of God with His word, the mysterious converse where God as Being, gives Himself entirely to God as Thought, where the Father communicates all His substance to the

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens Métaphysiques*, II. 5.

<sup>2</sup> [Sir W. Hamilton denies to this speculation the praise of originality. "It is," he says, "but a transference to man, *in via*, of that mode of cognition which all Christian divines have attributed to man, *in patria*," —*Discussions*, p. 199.]

Son. This divine word, this eternal reason, shines in our souls, and makes us see in God some of the ideas enfolded in His infinite essence—and this is our weak reason.<sup>1</sup>

But God is not only truth and thought, He is also order and love. He knows and loves Himself; and He loves all beings which can emanate from Him in the proportion in which each of them represents Himself. In communicating to us some rays of His intelligence, He has also given us a scintillation of His love, and that is what we call our will. To will, is to be directed towards that which we love, and we can only love an object in proportion as it is good; that is to say, as it participates in the divine goodness, the only true object of our love on its own account. In this way, as we see all in God, so we love all in Him. It is not enough to conceive Him as King of the physical universe, the first principle of all forms and of all motions; we must learn to know Him as Master of our minds and hearts, as the prime cause of all our thoughts, acts, and inclinations.

How can the Creator be anything else than the universal, and sole truly efficacious cause? Let us consider what is a creature? That which is nothing of itself; consequently that which of itself tends to nothing, and only continues in existence by the efficacy of the divine will. The idea of a creature, then, does not imply any intrinsic efficacy. Besides, what means have we of understanding how a created and dependent being can give itself a particular determination; how a body, for in-

Loving all things in God.

Malebranche's view of creaturely dependence, and of the doctrine of *fœderis*.

<sup>1</sup> *Méditations Chrétiennes*, I. and II.

<sup>2</sup> *De la Recherche de la vérité*, I., 1 and 2.



stance, can give itself such and such a movement, or a soul such and such a volition? It is a first principle that the preservation of creatures is a continuous creation; from which it follows that every creature requires every moment, for its preservation, an act like that which first drew it out of nothing. See, then, a body, which at a given moment, possesses a particular figure or motion. God then creates it with this form and movement. To suppose this body able to give itself, at the present moment, a different figure and motion, would be to suppose that the body exceeds the divine action, that it makes itself such, that it creates itself, which is a contradiction. God alone is therefore powerful, alone efficacious, alone moves souls and bodies. He is their mover, not at random, but according to harmonious laws. A given movement of the soul answers to a given movement of the body; hence the union of soul and body, and all the order of nature.

Why did  
God create  
the world?

It remains to inquire why this God, who moves all things, in whom we see all, for whom we love all—has made this world, and why He has made it such as it is? Shall we believe with Descartes that the creation of the world is the work of an indifferent liberty. Far from it. Descartes is here wrong; and we must correct him, by the help of Saint Augustine. An indifferent must necessarily be a capricious liberty, at least, unless we would employ words abusively, and, in place of caprice, introduce a blind necessity under the name of indifference. But God is reason itself. He is also order and right. He is therefore free from all caprice, and from all necessity, and does

nothing, except by the counsels of wisdom, and the inspirations of love.

Here is a first view of the *wherefore* of creation. But human curiosity does not pause here. It is all too little for it to know, generally, that God has made the world, and that He has made it worthy of His goodness, and of His wisdom. It would know upon what ground the world seemed to its Creator worthy of existence. It would know if He has created it finite in extent, or infinite. If infinite, is it not equal to God? If finite, what proportion does it bear to its cause? Then, is the world perfect or imperfect? Perfect it cannot possibly be; if imperfect, why in such a degree rather than such another? These are dark questions, upon which, however, reason throws some gleams, aided in its need by the revelations of faith.

Let us start from evident principles. God is free, and omnipotent. But God can only act according to what He is, and to all that He is.<sup>1</sup> But He is reason, truth, justice, and to use one word which expresses the entireness and harmony of His attributes, He is order.<sup>2</sup> He cannot, therefore, act otherwise than according to the eternal laws of order, which are eternally graven in His mind, and thence reflected upon ours: First, then, it is clear, that if God resolves to use the creative action, it is because He esteems it conformable to order; because, in the view of His wisdom, the being of creatures is better than their non-existence. Here is that which is cer-

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, IX.

<sup>2</sup> *Traité de Morale*, I., 14.

tain. But it would seem that the existence of the world from all eternity follows from this. For its conformity to order is an eternal truth, and the wisdom of God is eternal also. But if we suppose the world eternal, that is to say, infinite in duration, this is a natural consequence of making it infinite in extent, so that it may express the immensity of God by its dimensions, as it reflects His eternity in its duration.

Order requires a world limited in extent and duration.

Shall we accept these two grave conclusions? Malebranche cannot decide to do so. "Observe carefully," he says, "that God can never do anything which belies His qualities, and must leave all the marks of their dependence upon creatures who are essentially dependent. But the essential character of dependence is to have once been non-existent. An eternal world appears to be a necessary emanation from the Divinity. It is necessary that God should mark that He is so completely self-sufficient, that for an eternity He could dispense with His work."<sup>1</sup>

Order, then, will have a world limited in duration, as well as a world limited in extent. For this cause, at whatever cost, we must reject the infinite *vortices* of the Cartesian world. "Let us leave to the creature the character which is suitable to it; let us assign to it nothing which approaches to the Divine attributes." This is all very well. But when this difficulty is thus solved, another presents itself.

How is a limited world worthy of its creator?

If, in point of fact, the world is so completely limited; if its extension and duration are, as it were, lost in the immensity of possible extensions

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la Metaphysique*, IX., 7.

and conceivable durations, how is it worthy of its Creator? how can it express His perfections, and be an instrument of His glory?

The difficulty appears insoluble; and I can understand the extreme embarrassment of Malebranche. On the one hand, he has proved that the world should express the perfections of God, and that in that lies the reason for the existence of creatures. On the other hand, order demands a world finite in duration, in extent, in the number of creatures of which it is composed. Would such a world present a sufficient motive of action to God? Apparently not; unless, indeed (as Malebranche, struck by a sudden flash of inspiration, takes up the problem again), God has found the sublime secret of making His work divine, and of rendering it proportionate to His Divine action. "However great and perfect the universe may be supposed to be, as long as it is finite it must be unworthy of the action of an infinite God. God, then, would never adopt the design of producing it." How, then, shall He draw the universe from this profane condition? How shall He render it worthy of His approbation? By the union of one Divine Person, that is to say, by the incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

God, in truth, has not formed man, the most complete and the most excellent creature in the universe, without foreseeing the whole course of his destinies. He knew from all eternity that man, quickly fallen from his first estate, would have need of the Divine hand to raise him up, and He reserved it for Himself to raise man, and

The Incarnation, says Malebranche, renders creation worthy of God.

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, IX., 4 Cf., *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce*, 1 Art. 1-6.

with him the whole creation, by means of the Divine Mediator. At the moment fixed in the eternal counsel of the Almighty, the Word is to be made flesh. He is to unite Himself not only to the mind of man, but to his body also; and by this mysterious union, the human soul, the human body, all souls, and all bodies, in short, the whole creation of God is to be transformed, elevated, and sanctified. It is to have in it somewhat divine. It is to acquire an infinite value, and to become the expression of the infinite perfection of its Creator. And thus the incarnation of the Word, eternally meditated by the Creator, contains the final reason of creation. Sceptics imagine that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the scandal of reason, and, undoubtedly, this dogma has its obscurities. But, from the very bosom of the mystery of the God-man, there flashes a ray of light which illuminates the connection of the finite with the Infinite, of the creature with the Creator.

If Cartesian philosophers cry out against this unlooked for explanation, Malebranche answers, "What? Is not the universe, sanctified by Jesus Christ, and subsisting in Him, more divine, and worthier of the action of God, than all your infinite *vortices*?"

Theological objection, that this theory makes sin necessary, or the Incarnation useless.

But, here, the theologians object in their turn. If man had not sinned, they say, the Word would not have been incarnate. Consequently, you make sin necessary, or the Incarnation useless. This serious objection does not bring Malebranche to a pause. He plunges himself deeper in his theory, and fertile as he is in expedients, and inexhaustible in hypotheses, he heaps rashness upon

rashness: "Though man had never sinned," he says, "a Divine Person would not have failed to unite Himself to the universe, to sanctify it, to draw it from its profane condition, to render it divine, to give it an infinite dignity, so that God, who can only act for His own glory, should receive a glory perfectly correspondent to His action. Could not the Word unite Himself to the work of God without becoming incarnate? He was made man; could He not have made Himself of angelic nature? It is true that, in making Himself man, He unites Himself, at the same time, to two substances, and that by this union He sanctifies all nature. For this reason, I know not if sin has been the sole cause of the Incarnation of the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

Malebranche then flatters himself that he has assigned, in the Incarnation of our Lord, the general reason which has determined God to create. If, however, the world be considered in itself, is it found worthy of its principle? It should be so seemingly, as God could have no other end in creating the universe, than to make His perfections manifest in it. "What," it will be said, "do so many monsters and disorders, and such a profusion of impious sinners, contribute to the perfection of the universe?"

These objections are confessed by Malebranche to be specious. But they lose their gravity, upon considering, that to measure the perfection of a work, we must not only look at the end which the workman proposed to himself, but also take

Disorders  
in the  
world.

Theory of  
"God's  
ways," as  
the solution  
of these  
disorders.

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, IX., 5.

into account the means which he has employed to attain this end.

“God wills that His conduct, as well as His work, should bear the impress of His attributes. Not content that the universe should honour Him by its excellency and beauty, He wills that His ways should glorify Him by their simplicity, their fecundity, their universality, their uniformity, by all those characters expressive of the qualities which He makes it His glory to possess.” This is the key to all the difficulties which arise from the spectacle of evil. Consider only the *ends* of God, apart from His *ways*, and the world is an enigma, or rather a scandal. Why does God, who yesterday covered the whole country with flowers and fruits, ravage it to-day with frost or hail? Why does rain fall upon the sand of the deserts? why do so many seeds perish for want of conditions favourable to their development?<sup>1</sup> These questions, and a thousand like them, are easily solved, if we consider that God has established simple and general laws, in virtue of which, all the phenomena of the universe are accomplished. No doubt, God could hinder the rain from falling on the sands. But this determinate end would require a particular will. God would then dero-

<sup>1</sup> [The student of Butler will remember how he answers the objection, drawn from the world's not “becoming a state of moral discipline to many,” from the analogy of nature in the waste of seeds. “And I cannot forbear adding, that the *appearance* of such an amazing *waste* in nature, with respect to these seeds and bodies, by foreign causes, is to us as unaccountable as what is much more terrible, the present and future ruin of so many moral agents by themselves, *i.e.*, by *vice*.”—*Analogy*, Part I., c. 5. Let me refer to, and recommend Bishop Fitzgerald's note, pointing special attention to the distinction between the *terribleness* and *unaccountableness* of these very different, though in one respect analogous phenomena. Cf., *Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 152.]

gate from His general *ways*. His conduct would not be in harmony with His wisdom, that is to say, with order, the inviolable and necessary rule of His will.

It may be said, generally, that "God has seen from all eternity all possible works, and all possible ways of producing each of them. And as He only acts for His own glory, and according to what He is, He determined to will that work which could be produced and preserved by ways which, conjointly with this work, should redound more to His honour than any other work produced by any other way."<sup>1</sup> That which determines God is the relation composed of the beauty of the work, and the simplicity of the ways. "If the defects of the universe diminish this relation, the simplicity, fecundity and wisdom of the ways, or laws, which God follows, augment it the more. A more perfect world, but one produced by ways less fruitful, and less simple, would not have the impress of the Divine attributes so much as our own world. This is why the world is filled with wicked men, with monsters, with disorders of every kind." Malebranche is so convinced of the truth of this explanation, so ingenious in developing its consequences, and so pleased with their fruitfulness, that after having, as he thinks, resolved all difficulties which meet us in the natural order of things, he undertakes to solve those in the supernatural.

The kingdom of grace has its laws like that of nature. And just as motion is propagated and communicated in bodies, according to simple and

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique*, IX., 10.



universal laws, so is it with the effusion of the Divine gift in souls. It is asked why rain falls upon the sands; it may be asked also why grace drops ineffectually upon hearts ill-disposed to receive it. It is because God would have to act by particular volitions, to cause that grace to be withheld; in other words, He would have to perform miracles every moment. To expect this would be to wish that God should cease to conform to the sovereign laws of order, that He should cease to act as God.

"The design of God in His Church, is to make a work worthy of Himself. He wills His Church to be ample, for *He willeth that all men should be saved*. He wills that she should be holy, for this, above all things, is His will, *even the sanctification* of men. God, then, loves the greatness and the fairness of His work, but He loves, above all, the rules of His wisdom. He wills that all men should be saved, but He will only save those whom He can save, acting as He should act. Men must follow His ways. God will not change for them the order, the uniformity, the regularity of His government. The action of God must bear the stamp of the Divine attributes."<sup>1</sup>

The theory  
of the  
"Divine  
ways"  
applied to  
the solu-  
tion of  
theological  
mysteries.

The consequences of this theory are inexhaustible. Predestination, the fewness of the elect, eternal punishments, the most awful mysteries have nothing to terrify or perplex a philosophical theologian. Thanks to the principle of the "general will," all is explained, and becomes clear. That which appeared miraculous is only

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations Chretiennes*, VIII., 22.

the result of a hidden order. That which appeared mysterious becomes beautifully luminous. It seems, for a moment, as if miracles and mysteries were about to disappear, and intellect to dispense with faith, in presence of this adventurous theology, which refers everything to precise reasons, and universal laws.

“O, my only Master! hitherto I had believed that miraculous effects were more worthy of Thy Father than ordinary and natural effects. But now I comprehend that the power and wisdom of God appear more clearly, for those who meditate upon it aright, in the commonest effects, than in those which strike and astonish the mind, by reason of their novelty.<sup>1</sup> Let those who imagine that Nature is the principle of ordinary effects, and who judge of all things by the impression which they make upon their senses, stop short in admiring extraordinary effects; they have need of miracles to raise themselves to Thee. But let those who own that Thou art the only cause of all things adore without ceasing Thy wisdom, in the simplicity and fecundity of Thy ways.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [“‘But all this is to be ascribed to the general course of nature.’ True. It is to be ascribed to the general course of nature, *i.e.*, not surely to the words or ideas, *course of nature*; but to Him who appointed it.”—*Butler’s Analogy*, Part I., chap. ii. . It is well for us to see how our ordinary language becomes a veil, hiding God from us. Scaliger has finely said, “*Natura est ordinaria Dei potestas, sicut Fortuna ejus voluntas.*” —*De Subtil*, CLXXXVIII.]

<sup>2</sup> *Meditations Chrétiennes*, VIII., 22.

## DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

Admira-  
tion of  
Male-  
branche.

I admire Malebranche, and could wish to follow him always. I at once admire and love his flight towards things invisible, his enthusiasm for the philosophy of ideas, his calm and noble confidence in reason; what finishes the charm which he exercises over me is the perfect sincerity, the peculiar candour, and the exquisite simplicity to be found in all his discussions. His thoughts flow freely from their exuberant source. His vein of reflection is inexhaustibly fertile; and we can easily excuse in him his gentle self-complacency in his favourite thought. And what art, what innocent dexterity, he possesses in covering the weak sides of his speculation, in giving a touch of softness to them when they are dry, and drawing a veil over them when they are rash?

Faults in  
the system  
of Male-  
branche.

I am then delighted with the system of Malebranche, but I am not convinced. Need I say it? It seems to me that while he clings to the principles of Descartes, he develops them outrageously, and falsifies by exaggerating them.

The world  
is a phan-  
tom, and  
our bodies  
have merely  
a chimeri-  
cal exist-  
ence.

I am quite ready with Malebranche to detach myself from the sensible world, to enter into myself for the purpose of self-collection, and there while the senses and imagination are hushed, to listen to that voice of reason which speaks of the invisible and ideal. But to believe that the world with which I am connected by so many links is only a phantom of my imagination,<sup>1</sup> and that the very limbs which I move have only a

<sup>1</sup> [There is one important bearing of Malebranche's idealism to which M. Saisset does not allude. It annihilates the doctrine of

chimerical existence, is to take up too heavy a wager against good sense: it is to lose oneself at will in refined illusions, simply for the pleasure of not seeing that which the eyes of the vulgar see.

I am ready to admit the incompleteness and limitation of my understanding, the weakness and impotence of my will; but I can never be persuaded that I am entirely passive in the pursuit of truth, nor that my will may be analysed into desires in themselves perfectly impotent, so that in the last result my free-will consists merely in not hindering the natural elevation of my inclinations towards that which is good; that is to say, in a negative act which does nothing. Malebranche himself has so clearly perceived this consequence, that he has let slip the expression that the will, far from acting, is *acted upon*, thus torturing language to give the lie direct to the most certain of all experiences—that of the inner sense.

The intellectual faculties and the will are passive.

Transubstantiation. "There is no contradiction to sense in that mystery," say Roman Catholic divines. "The visible accidents remain unchanged; the unknown and unseen *substratum* in which they inhere, and which is incognizable by sense, alone is changed." But the position of the absolute Idealist is, that the accidents are the *total* in every so-called material substance, and that the substance supposed to be changed is *nil*. Hence Malebranche devised his theory of an unknown and otiose universe of matter. Sir William Hamilton observes that poor Malebranche's death, after his metaphysical discussion with Bishop Berkeley, may have had a more momentous cause than excitement. It may have been the anguish of broken convictions. Indeed, the whole Cartesian system of physics was early and fiercely attacked on two grounds. (1.) It makes *extension* the essential attribute of matter. But extension always supposes an extended and material subject. So in the Eucharist, after the sacramental words, the appearances of bread and wine are qualities under which resides an extended material subject; *i. e.*, real bread. (2.) It teaches that there is no *vacuum*, and speaks of the *indefinite extension* of the universe, which is but another word for its *infinitas*; *i. e.*, for Spinozism. See *Cousin, Phil. Cartesienne*, pp. 432 sqq., and the acute remarks of Sir William Hamilton, which will be found of special interest to the Theologian, in his article on "Idealism with reference to the scheme of Arthur Collier."]

A geometrical conception substituted for the real world.

I know that this evidence is suspected by Malebranche, that he distrusts a knowledge, which, as he says, is one altogether of individual sentiment. But let him carefully consider, that to throw a doubt upon the authority of consciousness is to corrupt spiritual philosophy at its very source, and to shake the foundations of the Cartesian edifice. For the true method of interior observation,<sup>1</sup> he introduces a precarious method, founded upon the uncertain basis of abstraction; for that which he calls the reason or pure intellect is, after all, abstraction, and nothing else. For this real and living world he substitutes a geometrical concept, the idea of extension; capable of form, division, and motion. I know that Descartes put Malebranche on this track; but Descartes knew where to stop. He, on the contrary, in the rapidity of his flight, entirely loses sight of this soul of ours, which is conscious of itself, which feels that it lives in a body, which is in connection with the universe, which is always active, even when it is merely attentive to its own thought, which feels that it is superior to its own desires, and that it is the mistress of its own resolutions. For this he substitutes a soul reduced to receiving perceptions as a body receives figures, and to obeying inclinations as inert bodies follow impulsions. And then, to prop up this universe, peopled with abstractions and chimeras, is there need of any other principle than undetermined being, the highest and hollowest of abstractions?

<sup>1</sup> [It is the glory of Scotch philosophy to have introduced psychology, based upon interior observation, for Metaphysics; Reid is the finest specimen of this. But too extreme an expulsion of Platonism degrades philosophy into a series of monographs upon the human faculties.]

He perceived this abyss, and recoiled from it. Changing masters, he asked St. Augustine and Plato to teach him of a God different from that of the Pantheists. This is well; and his conception of God, taken in itself, is grand and pure. This Sovereign Being, manifested to Himself by His reason, who is eternal truth, order, and good, is in fact the God of Plato and of St. Augustine. I adhere with all my energy to this idea of the all-perfect Being, conceived as independent and complete in Himself, knowing, and loving, and possessing Himself in the bosom of an eternal joy, and willing to communicate to His creatures some portion of His perfection and happiness. This is the Personal God, God the Creator. I admire those cherished thoughts of Malebranche, that God never acts but with wisdom and goodness, that God must have a reason worthy of Himself for the creation of the world, that the work must express the workman, that the universe can only be worthy of God if it is the image of His Infinity. But how is it His image? It is finite, according to Malebranche; and it must be so to bear the creature's stamp of imperfection upon it. But is that a decisive reason? Certainly Descartes, his master, would not have been satisfied with it. Malebranche rejects the Cartesian infinite vortices: had he a right to do so? That is not so sure. For he, like Descartes, reduces matter to extension, and allows that extension, taken ideally, is infinite. From which it follows, that the more really extended it is, the more it is a faithful copy of its eternal model.

But he deems it certain that the world is finite

How  
Male-  
branche es-  
capes from  
a Pantheis-  
tic conclu-  
sion.

To make up for the finite character of the world, Malebranche conceives that it has an infinite value from the Incarnation.

in space and time; and I allow that it is very difficult to admit an actually realised infinity of greatness. This being so, to render the world worthy of its author, he conceives it to derive an infinite value from the Incarnation of our Lord. Here is a strange thought, on which we must meditate long before we can appreciate its somewhat refined sublimity. What has misled him is doubtless the fact of seeing the universe and man thus raised to an infinite value, and one and the same principle explaining the mysteries of nature and of grace, reconciling and identifying faith and reason. I can well understand that such a thought should satisfy at once the philosopher and the Christian. It answered to his highest aspirations and to his deepest wants. It charmed and seduced that mystic spirit. Here, too, is the thought of a recluse living between Descartes and the Bible.

This theory as unsatisfactory to theologians as to philosophers.

But unhappily this theory, which ought to conciliate reason and faith, will, I fear, be received neither by philosophers nor by theologians. Theologians set about disclaiming it. What will Bossuet and Arnauld say of this miracle of grace become fatally necessary, of this mystery metamorphosed into a geometrically demonstrated truth? To speak generally, Malebranche's theory of Divine grace suppresses the supernatural by bringing it under the general laws of nature; and theologians are not likely to accede to such a position as that. Will the philosophers be better satisfied? I doubt it. They are assured that the world becomes worthy of God by the Incarnation. But it is a strange way to escape from one difficulty by entering into a labyrinth of others. The accumu-

lated mysteries of the Incarnation cannot be proposed as a *philosophic* solution of the problem of the creation of this world.<sup>1</sup>

I am no better satisfied with the explanation of the problem of evil which incessantly recurs in the system of Malebranche. He tells us that revolutions, disorders, hideousness, abortive germs, the suffering and the death of the innocent, matter but little. They are but particular accidents, and all this is nothing, while the principle of "general wills" triumphs. God must above all think of His glory. Perhaps the speculator has not sufficiently thought of His justice and goodness.

Finally, to sound the very depth of the matter, it seems to me that the last word of this mystic genius is, that nature is but one vast theatre for the movements of God, as men are only the impotent chords of an instrument with a thousand stops, which God uses for His glory. The universe is effaced. The human soul is dissipated and vanishes. There is no longer anything but God.

<sup>1</sup> [I have taken some liberties with the author's mode of expression, and omitted one or two sentences in this place.]



## Third Treatise.

### *The Pantheism of Spinoza.*

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I HAVE asked from Malebranche the secret of his master's philosophy. Here it is, he has answered; God is all, there is nothing but God. Is this the real meaning of Descartes? At all events, it is not the final conclusion of reason.

Spinoza.

Shall I turn to Spinoza to ascertain what I should believe about God, according to Descartes and to reason? I hesitate, for I hear it said that he is an Atheist. It is certain that the rabbis excommunicated him in his lifetime. And in truth when I throw my eye over his *Treatise on Theology*, when I see what he thought of the prophets, the miracles, and the Jewish law,<sup>1</sup> I can understand the sentence. He was an absolute rationalist; of that there can be no doubt. So all Christian Churches agreed to condemn him. He was given up to popular insults. Portraits were scattered abroad in which he was represented with Satanic features,

<sup>1</sup> [Spinoza resolves *prophecy* into an unusual force of *imagination*. The prophets were 'not, he says, men of extraordinary gifts, and he sneers at Daniel as incapable of understanding his own revelations, even when they were explained. He seems to put Mahomet on a level with the Hebrew prophets. In the supernatural sense of the word, there is no prophecy, according to him; and a miracle, being a violation of the necessary laws of nature, is impossible.]

his hand armed with serpents, and with legends such as this : *Benôit<sup>1</sup> de Spinoza, Jew and Atheist*; or, again : *Benôit de Spinoza, prince of Atheists, bearing upon his face the marks of reprobation*. Yet a man is not an Atheist, for having been excommunicated by the rabbis, nor indeed for having been anathematized by all the clergy of Europe—for there have been found Christians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, to accuse Descartes of Atheism.

To judge Spinoza is the business of philosophers. But here philosophers appear to make common cause with orthodoxy. Malebranche, so gentle in character, so audacious in speculation, calls Spinoza a *wretch*. What shall we say of the sceptic Bayle's definition of Spinozism ; "a regular system of Atheism?" Voltaire himself, in other respects very indulgent to the sallies of Spinoza, makes of him an enemy of God.<sup>2</sup>

Different  
views of  
Spinoza.

For the last half century, there has been a complete change. Lessing is indignant that Spinoza should be treated *like a dead dog*. Novalis discovers in this pretended Atheist a mystic, drunk with God. Schleiermacher invokes him devoutly as a saint. In the estimation of others, he is an Indian mouni, a Persian sophi. Nay, further, a contemporary of Spinoza, Wachter, had pointed him out as a disguised Cabbalist. This is a strange conjecture,<sup>3</sup> but one which was not entirely rejected

<sup>1</sup> [Or, Baruch. Even Voltaire, shocked at his refusal to see design in the universe, cries out, "*tu te trompes, Baruch !*"]

<sup>2</sup> [Alors un petit Juif, au long nez, au taint blême Caché sous le manteau de Descartes, son maître, da Marchant à par comptés, s'approcha du grand Etre :—Pardonnez moi, dit il, en lui parlant tout bas, *Mais je pense, entre nous, que vous n'existez pas.*]

<sup>3</sup> [M. Saisset has lately written a very interesting paper on the ques-

by Leibnitz, who knew Spinoza personally, and who, at the time of his journey to the Hague, had a long conversation with him on physics, politics, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Why should not I also visit Spinoza? For if he is far from us in years, he is near to us in mind and sentiments. I can at least mentally introduce myself to him, thanks to Colerus, that worthy minister of the Lutheran Church, an accurate, pious, and excellent man, who has delineated to the life the features of Spinoza, when he was scarcely buried.

I repair to the Pavilioengragt at the Hague, and enter into the house of Van der Spyck, where Spinoza lives. What is he doing, without family, without worship, without any extraneous support, in this little room, in the narrow home of poor people? He passes his time, his landlord says, in study and in working at his glasses.

In fact, Spinoza, cast out of the synagogue, poor and determined to be dependent upon no one, had learned a mechanical art, in which besides he remained faithful to the traditions of his family and his faith. The art which he chose was that of making glasses for telescopes. He was a good optician, Leibnitz somewhere says, keeping discreetly silent about the rest. But Spinoza had no

tion whether the Pantheism of Spinoza came from Maimonides, as M. Cousin maintains, or from Descartes. The question really at issue is a deeper one—whether modern Pantheism is an accident, arising from the Cabbalistic education of a Portuguese Jew, or whether it springs essentially from certain tendencies of modern philosophy. The fact seems to be that the *exegesis* of Spinoza in the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* comes from Maimonides, the *philosophy* in the *Ethica* from Descartes. —*Revue des deux Mondes*, 15 January 1862. Art. *La Philosophie des Juifs*.]

<sup>1</sup> [See the late publications of M. Foucher de Careil upon Leibnitz, specially *Refutation inédite Spinoza*, p. 40, and preface, 64.]

need to be so good a craftsman to gain his livelihood. It is incredible, exclaims honest Colerus, how sober and how good a manager Spinoza was. We see by different little accounts, found among his papers, that he lived a whole day on milk-soup made with butter, which cost three sous, and a pot of beer for a sou and a half. That was all which was needed to support the meagre and languid frame which was tenanted by that powerful mind. Colerus describes Spinoza as of a very feeble organization, thin, sickly, and consumptive from his youth. "He was a man of middle height: he had well-proportioned features, his skin darkish, his hair curled and black, his eye-brows long and of the same colour, so that by his mien one easily recognised him as a descendant of the Portuguese Jews. For his dress, he took very little heed to it, saying that it is contrary to good sense, to give a valuable wrapper to things of nought, or of little value."

If his manner of life was thus regular, his conversation was not less gentle. He knew admirably well how to restrain his passions. He was never seen either very sad or very joyful. In any sudden access of anger or displeasure which came upon him, he had so thoroughly learned the secret of self-possession that no external symptom of agitation appeared. He was, moreover, very affable and easy of access, and frequently spoke to his landlady, especially at the time of her confinement, and to those who lodged in the same house, when any sickness or trial fell upon them; he never failed at such periods to console them, and to exhort them to suffer

Life 'and  
character  
of Spinoza.

with patience the evils which God had assigned to them as their portion. He warned the children to attend frequently at Divine service in church, and taught them how obedient and submissive to their parents they should be. When the people of the house came back from the sermon he used often to ask them how they had profited by it, and what they had stored up for their edification."

"He had (continues Colerus) a great esteem for my predecessor, Dr. Cordes, who was a learned man, of good natural parts, and of an exemplary life, which gave Spinoza an opportunity of passing eulogiums upon him. He even sometimes went to hear him preach, and especially prized the learned manner in which he explained Scripture, and the solid applications of it which he made. At the same time, he would warn his landlord and those in the house never to miss any sermon of so able a man. It happened that his landlady one day asked him if he thought that she could be saved in the religion which she professed; to which he answered, 'Your religion is good; you should not seek any other, nor doubt that you can be saved in it, provided that, while you cling to piety, you lead at the same time a tranquil and peaceable life.'"

Whilst he was an inmate of the house he gave no trouble to any one. He passed the greater part of his time quietly in his own room. When he happened to be tired by too continuous attention to his philosophical meditations, he came down stairs to refresh himself, and to speak to the people of the house upon any topic of ordinary conversa-

tion, even upon trifles. He used to amuse himself sometimes with smoking a pipe of tobacco;<sup>1</sup> or again, when he wished for longer relaxation, he searched for spiders, which he made fight together, or for flies, which he placed in the spider's web, and then looked upon the battle with such pleasure that he sometimes used to break out into loud laughter. He would also observe with the microscope the minutest insects, from whence he drew those deductions which seemed to him most suitable to his discoveries.

Such was the man whom riches, honour, glory, and high friends, came to look after in the midst of his solitude. He sacrificed all this without a struggle to live happily in deep peace and absolute independence. His friend, Simon de Vries, wanted one day to make him a present of two thousand florins, that he might live more comfortably; but Spinoza civilly declined, under the pretext that he wanted for nothing. The same friend, at the close of his life, finding himself without wife and children, wished to make a will, leaving Spinoza heir to all his property; but Spinoza would not consent to it, and remonstrated with him against the notion of leaving his property to any one but his brother.

<sup>1</sup> [Höbbes appears to have been as great a contrast to Spinoza in his use of tobacco as in his contempt for sermons, and his inveterate enmity to human nature. "Soon after dinner he retired to his study, and had his candle, with ten or twelve pipes of tobacco laid by him; then shutting his door, he fell to smoking, thinking, and writing for several hours: even in the chapel upon Sundays he went out after prayers, and turned his back upon the sermon, and when any friend asked the reason of it, he gave no other but this—*They could teach him nothing but what he knew.* He had often a jealousy that the Bishops would ruin him; and of all the Bench he was most afraid of the Bishop of Sarum, *thinking every man's spirit to be remembrance and revenge.*"—*Kennet's Memoirs of the Cavendish Family*, p. 107.]

Another friend of Spinoza, the illustrious John de Witt, forced him to accept a pension of two hundred florins; but as his heirs raised some difficulty about continuing the payment, Spinoza put his title-deeds into their hands with such quiet indifference, that they re-considered the matter, and yielded with a good grace what they had just refused.

At the time of the French campaign in Holland, the Prince de Condé, who was then taking possession of the government of Utrecht, had a lively desire to converse with Spinoza. It even appeared that there was some question of procuring for him a pension from the King, and that there was a desire to engage him to dedicate some of his works to Louis XIV. Spinoza himself explained that, "as he had no intention of dedicating anything to the King of France, he had refused the offer that had been made to him with all the civility of which he was capable." It is not known whether the interview of Spinoza with the Prince de Condé actually took place; but it is certain that Spinoza went to the French camp, and that, upon his return, the populace of the Hague was in commotion, taking him for a spy. Spinoza's landlord rushed to him with alarm. "Don't be afraid," said Spinoza, "it is easy for me to justify myself. At all events, as soon as the people make the least noise at your door, I will go out straight to them, though they may treat me as they did poor de Witts. I am a good republican, and have never had any other aim than the glory and advantage of the state."

Spinoza related to Leibnitz, that on the day of the assassination of the brothers De Witt, he wanted to go out and put up in the streets, near the spot of the murders, a placard, with these words: *ultimi barbarorum!* His landlord was obliged to use force to keep him in the house.<sup>1</sup> On Sunday, the 23d of February 1677, Spinoza's landlord and his wife had gone to church. On coming out from church, they learned with surprise that Spinoza had just expired. He was only 45 years of age; although he had been in a weak state for some months, there were no symptoms ominous of so rapid a death. Everything proves that he died as quietly as he had lived.

The work of his life was finished. He had written his famous *Ethica*, and communicated it to some friends, but without publishing it, for fear of disturbing uselessly the tranquillity which he enjoyed. In this strange book, the idea, over which he had long brooded, had assumed its definitive shape. Had he lived fifty years longer, it can hardly be conceived that he would have wished to change a syllable.

The first book is entitled, *De Deo*. Spinoza then, has a God, for it is clear that such a man would never have deceived any one. What is God in the system of Spinoza?

I open the *Ethica*, and, instead of an ordinary and familiar discourse, such as Descartes wrote, I find definitions, axioms, postulates, and then a series of propositions, corollaries, and scholia. Why this geometrical apparatus? Does Spinoza wish

<sup>1</sup> See the note of Leibnitz, first published by M. Foucher de Careil, *Réputation inédite de Spinoza*, Editor's Preface, p. 64. Paris. 1854.



to throw a veil over his thoughts? Evidently not. Such tricks are alien to his character. The true motive is, that in his eyes philosophy is essentially *à priori*; and hence, the mathematical form is its sole and necessary shape.

Spinoza wishes that science should rest upon the loftiest object of thought, and that, descending by degrees from the heights of being in itself, it should follow the chain of beings, and reproduce the true order and real movement of things in the order and movement of its conceptions.

Spinoza's  
method.

We must pause a little upon this method of Spinoza, which is one of the keys to his system. Of an essentially reflective genius, educated in the severe school of Descartes, Spinoza was not ignorant, that in philosophy there is no problem anterior to that of method. Those important objects, the constitution of the human understanding, the legitimate order of its operations, the fundamental law which should regulate them, had occupied his earliest meditations, and he did not cease to be busy with them all his life. We know that, before writing his *Ethica*, he had laid the foundations of a complete treatise upon method. The work is in an unfinished state; it was several times taken up, and laid down again, without having been ever completed: yet the general views of Spinoza are sufficiently indicated in it, to attentive eyes, by features of singular strength and boldness.

His treatise  
*De Intellectus Emendatione*,<sup>1</sup> an  
Essay upon  
Method.

In the beginning of this work, Spinoza traces for us the picture of a soul, which perishable

<sup>1</sup> See his *Opera Posthuma*, p. 254; and vol. ii. of the French Translation.

goods no longer suffice, and which, far from pleasure, glory, and all the chimeras, whose pursuit occupies and fatigues vulgar souls, seeks for an enduring serenity and perfect peace.

"Experience," he says, "having made me see that all the ordinary events of common life are vain and futile things, I have formed, finally, the resolution of investigating whether there exists a true good, a good which, by itself alone, can fill the entire soul, after it has rejected all the rest; a good, in short, which, when it is found and possessed, gives to the soul the eternal and supreme happiness."<sup>1</sup>

Why are such thoughts placed at the opening of a treatise upon method? Because Spinoza does not separate in science two things which are inseparable in fact—the pursuit of Truth, and that of Good. In his eyes, man is essentially a being who thinks, and, to borrow his own strong expression, an idea. The happiness of such a being can only be found in thought; and the highest degree of human knowledge must be the highest degree of human felicity. The supreme happiness, then, is no fantastic ideal, that can never be grasped by our misery. Spinoza believes firmly that a philosophic soul can attain it, even in this life.

"Reason," he writes to William de Blyenberg, "constitutes my enjoyment; and the end to which I aspire in this life is not to pass it in grief and sighs, but in peace, joy, and serenity."<sup>2</sup>

Whence, in fact, arise the evils and agitations

<sup>1</sup> *De Intellectus Emendatione*, Tom. iii., p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter xviii.*, T. ii., p. 374.

of the soul? "They have their origin in that excessive love, which binds it to things subject to a thousand variations, and which it is impossible to possess permanently. No one, in truth, has any disquietude or anxiety, except for the object which he loves; and wrongs, suspicions, and enmities, have no other source than that love which inflames us for objects which we cannot really possess in their plenitude."<sup>1</sup>

"On the contrary, the love which has for its object something eternal and infinite, nourishes our soul with a joy that is pure, and free from any intermixture of sadness; and all our efforts should tend towards a good so truly enviable."<sup>2</sup>

The soul cannot love this eternal and infinite object, unless she can know it. But let it once be granted to the soul to conceive this clearly, and she can incontinently possess it in plenitude, and the purified joy of this completely intellectual possession has this special privilege, that it may be shared without being weakened.

Fundamental problem of life, according to Spinoza.

This then is the fundamental problem of life, namely, by what means can the soul attain the infinite and eternal Being, whose knowledge should fill up all its desires? Here Spinoza attentively surveys the nature of the human understanding, and sketches a theory of the degrees of knowledge, which at first sight seems a little perplexed, but is in reality very simple.

Four degrees in the hierarchy of human knowledge.

According to him, all our perceptions may be brought under one or other of four fundamental classes. The *first* is founded upon *simple hearsay*,

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Part V., Propos. xx., Schl.

<sup>2</sup> *De Intellectus Emend.*, vol. ii., p. 277.

and in general upon a sign. The *second* is acquired by a *vague*, or *passive experience*, which is not determined by the understanding. The *third* consists in conceiving one thing in its *relation* to another, but not in an adequate and absolute manner. The *fourth* reaches the thing in its *essence*, or in its immediate cause.

If I understand this graduated scale, Spinoza places on the lowest *round* of knowledge those blind beliefs, tumultuous impressions, and confused images, with which the vulgar are beguiled. This is the world of imagination and of the senses, the region of opinions and of prejudices.

Here Spinoza traces a division, to which, however, he does not attach much importance, since in his *Ethica* he re-unites, under the name of knowledge of the first degree, that which in the *Emendatio Intellectus* he has distinguished into perception by *simple hearsay*, and perception by means of *vague experience*. I know by hearsay my birthday, who were my ancestors, and the like. It is by vague experience that I know I must die. For I affirm that, because I have seen many of my fellows die, though they have not all lived the same time, or yielded to the same malady. I know in the same manner that oil possesses the property of feeding, and water that of extinguishing flame, and in general all things that bear on the common uses of life.

Useful as it practically is, the first kind of knowledge has no scientific value. It touches the accidents and the surface, not the essence and foundation of things. Given up to perpetual mobility, the work of fortune and chance, not of the inter-

nal activity of the thought, it agitates and occupies without enlightening the soul. It is the source of the evil passions which incessantly project their shadows over the pure ideas of the understanding, tear the soul from itself, disperse it in some sort towards external things, and trouble the serenity of its contemplations.

Third degree, *discursive reasoning*.

Knowledge of the second kind is a first effort to detach oneself from the shadows of the sensible world. It consists in linking an effect to its cause, a phenomenon to its law, a consequence to its principle. This is the proceeding of geometricians, who refer the properties of numbers and figures to a regular system of simple propositions, and incontestible axioms. This is the *discursive reason*, by which the human mind, aided by analogies and syntheses, ascends from the particular to the general, and descends from the particular, to increase, to enlighten, and to interlink more and more the objects of its knowledge.

Fourth degree, *reason*.

What is wanting to this kind of perception? One thing only, but that is capital. The discursive reason, reasoning infallible though it be, is a blind procedure. It explains the fact by the law, but it cannot explain the law. It establishes consequences by principles, but it accepts the principles by themselves without establishing them. It hammers out of our thoughts a chain of perfect regularity, but it cannot fix the first ring.

There is then a faculty superior to *reasoning*: it is *the reason*, whose proper object is being in itself, and by itself.

Spinoza illustrates these four modes of perception by an ingenious example. Given three num-

bers : find a fourth which shall be to the third as the second is to the first. Our shopkeepers say that they know very well what to do in order to find their fourth number ; in fact they have not forgotten the operation which they learned from their schoolmasters, which, however, when rightly understood is empirical and without demonstration. Others draw a general axiom from some particular cases borrowed from experience. They take an example like, say,

$$: 2 : 4 :: 3 : 6.$$

They find by experience that when the second of these numbers is multiplied by the third, the product divided by the first gives 6 for its quotient ; and hence they conclude that a like operation is good for finding every fourth proportional number. As for mathematicians, they know by the demonstration of the XIX. Proposition of the Seventh Book of Euclid what numbers are mutually proportioned. They know, by the very nature and properties of proportion, that the product of the first number by the fourth is equal to the product of the third by the second. But they do not see the adequate proportionality of the numbers given, or if they do see it, it is not by virtue of the proposition in Euclid but by intuition and without any operation.

The highest degree of knowledge consists then in the immediate intuition of a self-evident truth, in the instantaneous glance by which the mind, without effort, without obstacle, without any intermediary, grasps its object, embraces it in its entirety, and reposes there to some extent in unalloyed light with perfect serenity. We have

Experience before us all our means of knowledge. Let us  
 banished examine in turn their scientific value. Experience,  
 from Me- under its two forms, cannot give philosophical  
 taphysics. knowledge: for it supplies confused images, and  
 philosophy seeks ideas; it only reaches the acci-  
 dents of things, and science neglects the accidental  
 to attach itself to the essential. Consequently  
 experience is absolutely and unrestrictedly banished  
 from the domain of metaphysics.

Reasoning Knowledge of the second kind is less severely  
 gives cer- treated, because it leads to immediate intuition.  
 tainty, not At the same time, this kind of perception is not  
 light. that which the philosopher should employ. It is  
 true that reasoning can give certitude; but cer-  
 tainty is not sufficient for the philosopher—he also  
 requires light.

Spinoza's At first sight, this contempt for reasoning ap-  
 contempt- pears singular, in so strong and systematic a  
 for reason- reasoner as Spinoza. But we must understand  
 ing ac- his reasoning. Spinoza distinguishes two manners  
 counted of reasoning. Either we link together a series  
 for. of thoughts, by means of certain principles, which  
 we accept without examining or comprehending  
 them—and this is the blind reasoning which  
 Spinoza banishes from philosophy. Or we start  
 from a principle, clearly and immediately per-  
 ceived in itself, and from the adequate idea of  
 this principle, proceed to the adequate idea of its  
 effects or consequences; and this is philosophical  
 reasoning, where all is clear and intelligible, and  
 sensible images and blind beliefs find no place.  
 Reasoning, at this lofty elevation, becomes almost  
 confounded with immediate intuition. It is the  
 mightiest lever of the human mind. Above it,

there is nothing but *intellectual intuition* in its highest degree of purity and energy, which sets thought, and its sublimest object, face to face, uniting and, so to say, *unifying*, one with the other.

The law of philosophic thought is, therefore, to found science upon clear and distinct ideas, and to make use of no other process than of *immediate intuition*, and of reasoning based upon it. But the first object of immediate intuition is perfect being. And so Spinoza finally concludes, "that the perfect method is that which teaches us to direct the mind under the law of the idea of the absolutely perfect being."<sup>1</sup>

All the philosophy of Spinoza is, in fact, the development of one sole idea, the idea of the infinite, of the perfect, or, as he expresses it, of the idea of substance. Substance is being—not such or such a being, but absolute being, being which is all being, and, outside which, no being can be conceived. Spinoza's philosophy starts from the idea of "substance," i.e., the infinite.

Substance, in one sense, is undetermined, for every determination is a limit, and every limit a negation.<sup>1</sup> But it is profoundly and necessarily determined in this other sense, that it is real and perfect, and, in virtue of this, possesses necessary attributes, so closely united to its essence, that they cannot be separated, and are not distinguished in reality; for, take away these attributes, and you take away the essence of substance; you take away substance itself. Substance, in one sense, "undetermined and unconditioned," but "determined" in another, as possessed of attributes.

Substance, infinite being, has necessarily attri-

<sup>1</sup> *De Emend. Intell.*, ii. 287.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, ii., pp. 389, 390, 391.



Attributes  
of sub-  
stance not  
absolutely  
infinite.

butes, and each of those attributes expresses, in its own way, the essence of Substance. But this essence is infinite, and none but infinite attributes can express an infinite essence. Each attribute of substance is, therefore, necessarily infinite. But with what sort of infinity? with an infinity that is relative, and not absolute.<sup>1</sup> If an attribute of substance were, in fact, infinite, that attribute would be the infinite, it would be substance itself. But it is not substance, only one of its manifestations, distinct from every other, therefore particular and determined, perfect, and infinite in itself, but in a particular and determined kind of infinity and perfection.

Thought  
and exten-  
sion are  
attributes  
of sub-  
stance; in  
what sense  
infinite.

Thus, thought is an attribute of substance, for it is a manifestation of being. Therefore, thought is infinite. But thought is not extension, which is also a manifestation of being, and, consequently an attribute of substance. Similarly, extension is not thought. Therefore, thought and extension are infinite, but with a relative infinity; and perfect, but with a determined perfection; they are, if one may so speak, perfect and infinite, with an imperfect perfection, and a finite infinity.

Substance alone is infinite and perfect in itself,

<sup>1</sup> [It is a curious instinct which leads men to conceal from themselves vicious actions, or irreverent thoughts, under verbal distinctions. Aristotle has shewn how the most glittering threads of praise may be drawn out of the web of vice; thus, the furious becomes honest, the obstinate dignified, the rash brave, and the spendthrift liberal; theft is "conveying," and drunkenness merriment.—(*Rhet.* i. 9, 29.) So Descartes avoids the apparent impiety of an *infinite* creation, by terming it *indefinite*. And good men have thrown a mist over certain extreme assertions, of the insincerity of the Divine offers of grace, by speaking of the Divine *velleity* as distinct from the Divine will.—See *Burgersdyk Metaphysica.*]

full and absolute being. But it is not enough that every attribute of substance should express the absolute infinity by its relative infinity. To express absolutely a truly absolute infinity, we want not only infinite attributes, but an infinity of them. If a certain finite number of infinite attributes completely expressed the essence of substance, that essence would not be infinite. There would be in it a limit, a negation, if not in each of its manifestations, taken by itself, at least at bottom and in its nature. But it implies a contradiction that the finite should be found in that which is infinity itself, and that anything negative should enter into that which is positively absolute being. That which is only determinedly infinite does not exclude, nay, rather, it implies some negation; but the absolutely infinite supposes the negation of all negation. Any number, however prodigious, of infinite attributes is, therefore, infinitely far from being able to express the infinite essence of substance, and it is only an infinity of infinite attributes which can adequately represent a nature which is not only infinite, but the absolutely infinite, the infinitely infinite infinite.

Substance has an infinity of attributes (in this sense infinite).

Substance, therefore, has necessarily attributes, an infinity of attributes, and each of these attributes is infinite in its kind. But an infinite attribute has necessarily *modes*. What would thought be without the ideas which express it, and develop its essence? What would extension be without the figures which determine it, without the motions which give it diversity? Thought and extension are not universal, abstract things,

Modes of attributes.

vague and confused ideas. They are real manifestations of being. And being is not a dead and barren something; it is activity and life. Just, then, as attributes are needed to express the essence of substance, modes are needed to express the essence of attributes. Take away the modes of the attribute, and the attribute does not exist, precisely as being would cease to be, if we suppose the attributes which express it to be removed.

Modes are  
necessarily  
finite.

On the contrary, modes, being manifold, are necessarily finite. For, were each of them infinite, the attribute, whose essence they express, would no more be a peculiar and determined kind of infinity. It would be infinity itself, and not such or such an infinite. It would not be the attribute of substance, but substance itself. The mode, then, can only express in a finite manner the relative infinity of the attribute, just as the attribute can only express in a relative (though infinite) manner, the absolute infinity of substance.

The attribute still remains infinite in itself, and the infinity of its essence must be recognised in its manifestation. But suppose that an attribute of substance has only a certain number of modes, this attribute cannot be infinite, since it can be exhausted. For instance, it is a contradiction to say that a certain number of ideas exhausts the infinite essence of thought, that infinite extension can be expressed by a certain corporeal bulk, however prodigious. Infinite thought must, then, develop itself by an inexhaustible infinity of ideas, and infinite extension can only be expressed

in its perfection and totality by an infinite variety of magnitudes, forms, and motions.

Thus, then, from the bosom of substance an infinity of attributes necessarily flows, and an infinity of modes necessarily flows from each of these attributes. The attributes are not separated from substance, nor the modes from the attributes. The relation of the attribute to the substance is the same as that of the mode to the attribute: all is connected without confusion, and distinguished without separation. A common law and unbroken proportion keep substance, attribute, and mode eternally distinct and eternally united. That is being, the all, reality, God.

This is the leading idea of Spinoza's metaphysics. It cannot be denied that that vigorous genius has developed it powerfully into a rich and extensive system; but he has exhausted himself in doing so, and has never passed the horizon line within which it bounded him. It is one vast conception, founded upon a single principle, containing in itself all the developments that the most potent logic can find in it. The geometrical form should not deceive us. Spinoza demonstrates his doctrine, if we will, but he demonstrates it with certain premisses *given*, which at bottom suppose and contain it. It is a perpetual "vicious circle;" or rather, instead of a demonstration of his system, Spinoza is always turning it round and round, and the *Ethica* presents to us, not the proof of it, but its development—a development as arbitrary as it is regular.

The definition of substance once laid down, Spinoza has no trouble in demonstrating that sub-

Substance,  
attribute,  
and mode,  
distinct yet  
united.

Geometrical form of  
Spinozism  
—its "vicious circle."

Spinoza's proof of the existence of the one sole substance, founded upon his definition of substance. stance exists, and that one substance only can exist. "Prop. xi. God, *i.e.*, a substance, constituted by an infinity of attributes, of which each expresses an eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists. Demonstration: if you deny God, conceive, if possible, that God does not exist. His essence, then, would not include existence. But this is absurd. Therefore, God necessarily exists, Q.E.D."

No other substance but God, according to Spinoza. God, or substance, is sole and singular. In fact, argues Spinoza, God is the absolutely infinite Being, from which we cannot exclude any attribute, expressing the essence of a substance, and He exists necessarily. If, then, there existed any other substance but God, it must develop itself by some one of the attributes of God, and, in this way, there would be two substances of the same attribute, which is absurd. For, where all is identical, substance and attributes, there are not two beings, but one only. Consequently, no other substance but God can exist.

Two propositions exhaust our knowledge of God. The existence and unity of God are demonstrated. It remains to construct our knowledge of God. While Spinoza maintains that God must develop Himself necessarily in an infinity of infinite attributes, he asserts that we can know but two, namely, extension and thought. So that our knowledge of God is reduced to these two propositions: God is absolute Extension, God is absolute Thought.

Spinoza's unsatisfactory definitions of the nature of God, extension, and thought. The point now is, to define the nature of these three things, God, extension, and thought, and to mark out their relations. But it is just here that it is so hard to get at Spinoza's real doctrine.

Spinoza positively declares, that God is absolutely indivisible, in His attributes, as well as in His essence. From hence it evidently follows (and this is his express doctrine),<sup>1</sup> that God is incorporeal. But if God, taken in Himself, suffers no corporeal limitation, He must equally be emancipated from all intellectual limitation. To suppose in God understanding and will, even if they be infinite, is not less absurd than to suppose motion. The majesty of the divine nature is equally degraded by either hypothesis. In fact, will and understanding, even when infinite, are modes of thought, as motion and figure are modes of extension. God, in Himself, has neither body, understanding, nor will.<sup>2</sup>

Our science of God will, therefore, come to this strange issue : God is extended, yet incorporeal ; God thinks, and has no understanding ; God is free and active, and He has no will. Strange theological conclusions.

Far from being alarmed at these contradictions, which, according to him, only exist for the vulgar, Spinoza delights in developing them with an imperturbable serenity. First, he says, extension is an attribute of God ;<sup>3</sup> in fact, extension is infinite, and that which is infinite can only be God, or an attribute of God. Extension is infinite. I say that extension is infinite ; for, try to limit extension, and wherewith do you limit it ? With itself. In reality, to conceive a limited extension, is no longer to conceive extension, but one of its modes, that is to say, a body : real, incorporeal extension, taken in its plenitude

<sup>1</sup> *De Deo*, Prop. xii., xiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, Part I., Prop. xv., Schol.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Part I., Prop. xvii., Schol.

and perfection, is perfectly positive, that is, without negation, that is, without limitation.

Extension  
an attri-  
bute of  
God.

Extension, therefore, is not a mode, since every mode is finite by its very nature. On the other hand, extension, though infinite, is not the infinite, the Absolute Infinite; for it only contains one particular kind of perfection, and the Infinite Absolute comprises all. Extension is, then, a determined perfection, contained in absolute perfection—a relative infinity, which expresses, in its own way, the Absolute Infinity; in other words, it is an attribute of God.

Besides, we know that bodies, like all which exists, are in God, and by God.<sup>1</sup> But by what right, and how is it so? Because bodies are not substances, but modes, which contain the concept of extension, so that every body expresses in a finite manner the infinity and perfection of extension, which itself expresses, in a relative (though infinite) manner, the absolute perfection of substance.

*Deus est res  
extensa.*

Extension is a sort of intermediary between God, taken in Himself, in the absolute plenitude of His essence, and bodies, taken by themselves, in the necessary limitation of their nature—infinite, relatively to bodies, finite (in so far forth as it is a determination of being) relatively to substance. But we must not believe that extension is separate, or even distinguished from substance, otherwise than logically. Spinoza boldly says out, that infinite extension is God Himself—in terms more significant, again, *Deus est res extensa*.

But, again, God is indivisible, not only in the

<sup>1</sup> *De Deo*, Prop. xx.

depths of His unmanifested essence, but in all the immediate manifestations of that essence, in all the attributes which express and develope it. In fact, if infinite substance were divisible, the parts obtained by the division either would, or would not, retain the nature of substance. In the first case, we should have several substances of the same nature, or several gods, which is absurd; in the other, substance, once divided, would lose its nature, that is to say, would cease to be.<sup>1</sup> God is indivisible.

The result of this double demonstration is, that God is both extended and indivisible. Spinoza was not the man to deceive himself upon this enormous difficulty of his doctrine. But it must be confessed that he frankly meets it. All is explained, if we believe him, by the distinction between finite extension, which is properly body, and infinite extension, which only belongs to the nature of God. To affirm that God is extended, is not to affirm that God has length, bulk, and depth, and is terminated by a shape; for thus God would be a body, a finite being, which is absurd. God is not such or such a divisible and moveable extension, but extension in itself, immoveable and indivisible immensity.

It will be objected, that it is always possible to conceive any given extension, even if infinite, as divided into two parts; and it will be asked, if each of these parts of the divine immensity is finite or infinite. In the first case, the infinite will be composed of two finite parts; in the second case, we have an infinite, which is double Spinoza's answer to a metaphysical objection.

<sup>1</sup> *De Deo*, Prop. xii.



of another infinite—all consequences which appear untenable.

Spinoza answers, by denying positively that extension can be conceived as divided except by an act of imagination; but, by reason, it is impossible. Extension, according to him, is essentially one; it is not composed of parts, any more than a geometrical line is composed of a certain number of points; to conceive extension divided, is to destroy its essence, and to contradict the very notion.

But let us suppose extension divided; it is asked if each part will be infinite? Undoubtedly, but with an infinity appropriate to its nature, with a partial infinity. An objection may be made by some, who hear us speak of one infinity which is greater than another. This is, because they have not deeply enough considered the nature of the Infinite.

Three degrees of the Infinite.

There are three degrees of the Infinite.<sup>1</sup> In the *first* degree, we should place that which is absolutely infinite by virtue of its essence, that is to say, which is the Infinite itself, God. In the *second* degree are found relative and determined infinities, which are not infinite by virtue of their essence, but by virtue of the cause which produces them; for instance, infinite thought and extension. *Lastly*, there is yet a lower species of infinite things, those which have limits, but whose parts cannot be equalled or determined by any number, though the *maximum* or *minimum* may be known, in which these parts are comprised. For instance, a finite line has an infinite number of

<sup>1</sup> See all the XVth Letter to Louis Meyer.

points; a finite duration comprehends an infinity of instants. The *Infinite Absolute* has absolutely no limit, no determination. The *infinite relative* is unlimited, but at the same time determined in its essence. The infinite in the *third degree* is at once determined and limited in its essence; it is unlimited only in its parts.

Undoubtedly, that which is Absolutely Infinite has no numerical proportion with anything whatsoever. But it does not follow that it is contradictory to the nature of the infinite in general, that one infinite should be loftier and even greater than another. So, it may well be said, that extension, infinite as it is, is infinitely less infinite than substance; and that a sphere of extension, infinite in one sense by the infinity of its parts, is infinitely less great than extension, which is infinitely less so than substance. Why then should it not be permissible to say that one-half of infinite extension is in one sense infinite, and yet twice as small as extension whole and entire?

Let us conclude that there is no reason why we should not conceive God, as at once extended and incorporeal. On the contrary, it is just because He is extended, in a perfect manner, that He is perfectly incorporeal and indivisible.

God is absolute thought as He is absolute extension. Thought, in fact, is necessarily conceived as infinite, since we can very well conceive that a thinking being, in proportion as he thinks more, possesses a higher degree of perfection.<sup>1</sup> But there is no limit to this progress of thought. Whence it follows that every determined thought

Spinoza's  
conclusion  
—that God  
is extended,  
and yet in-  
corporeal.

God is  
absolute  
thought.

<sup>1</sup> *De Animâ*, Prop. I. Schol.

enfolds the conception of the infinite thought, which is no longer such or such a thought, that is to say, such or such a limitation, such or such a negation of thought, but thought itself, positively, in its plenitude and reality.

Thought, thus conceived, can only be an attribute of God. God, therefore, thinks; but He thinks in a manner which is worthy of Himself, absolutely and perfectly. What, upon this footing, can be the object of His thought? Is it Himself and nothing else? Is it at once Himself and all else? What, too, is the nature of this Divine thought? Has it any analogy with ours, any shadow at least of resemblance? And has the perfect archetype left some trace of itself to be found in the imperfect copy which we are?

The object  
of the  
divine  
thought.

The first and immediate object of the Divine thought, inasmuch as it is absolute, is God Himself, that is, substance. But does the Divine thought also comprise the attributes of substance? This is one of the obscurest points in the metaphysics of Spinoza. On one side, it does not appear that we can separate the thought of substance from the thought of its attributes, since these attributes are inseparable from its essence. But we must yield to the express assertions of Spinoza. He maintains that the idea of God, which is properly the idea of the attributes of God, is only a mode of the Divine thought, and, on this account, eternal and infinite as it is, it is referred not to the *natura naturans* (that is, to God Himself), but to the *natura naturata*. The Divine thought is therefore absolutely undetermined, and its object is absolutely undetermined

being, substance in itself, denuded of all the attributes, which in developing it already determine it.

If such is the nature and such the object of the Divine thought, what parallel is there between it and the understanding of man? The understanding, generally, is a determination of thought, and every determination is a negation. But there is no place for negation in the plenitude of thought.

What at bottom is the human understanding? Nothing more than one series of modes of thought, in other words, an idea, composed of a certain number of ideas. To suppose in the human soul, above its constitutive ideas, a power or faculty of producing them, is to realise abstractions. The whole essence of the understanding is comprised in ideas, as the whole essence of the will is exhausted in volitions. The will and the understanding generally are mere *entia rationis*, and if they are hypostatized, mere scholastic entities like humanity and lapidity.<sup>1</sup>

But it is perfectly clear that thought in God cannot be a determined series of ideas. If, then, we attribute intellect to God, we must suppose it infinite. But what is an infinite intellect? An infinite series of ideas. To conceive thus the thought of God is to degrade it; for it is to impose upon it the condition of development—it is to make it fall under succession and movement, and to load it with all the miseries of our nature. The understanding is in itself determined and successive. It consists in passing from one idea to another idea, in an effort which is always renewed, and always ineffectual, to exhaust the

<sup>1</sup> *De Animá*, Prop. XLVIII. Schol.

nature of thought. The understanding is unquestionably a perfection, for there is being in a series of ideas ; but it is the perfection of an essentially imperfect nature which is incessantly tending to a greater perfection, without ever being able to arrive at the goal of true perfection. Suppose the understanding infinite. It will only be an infinite series of modes of thought, and not thought itself. It will not be the absolute thought, which produces, without being confounded with, its relative modes : the infinite thought which is always giving birth and is never exhausted ; the immanent thought, which, while it fills the infinite course of time with its fleeting manifestations, remains unmoved in eternity.

Divine  
thought  
has *nothing*  
in common  
with ours  
—accord-  
ing to  
Spinoza.

Spinoza is so full of this opposition, that he exaggerates it yet further, and goes so far as to maintain that there is absolutely nothing in common between the Divine thought and our intellect. So that, if we do assign intellect to God, we must know, as he says with expressive roughness, that the Divine intellect no more resembles our own than the dog, the celestial sign, resembles the dog, an animal which barks.

It will now be easy for us to form an exact idea of free activity in God. And, first, it is certain that for God it is all one to exist, to act, to be free. There are, in fact, two results from the essence of God ; first, that He exists ; secondly, that He developes Himself by an infinity of infinite attributes, infinitely modified. But all development is an action. To be extended with God is to produce extension, to think is to produce thought. As substance developes itself by thought

and extension, so extension develops itself by motions and figures, and thought by ideas. To be extended with God is to produce bodies, to think is to produce souls. In all the degrees of being, we find existence and action united; in the relation of the mode to the attribute, of the attribute to substance, in the essence of substance itself, they interpenetrate one another and become confounded together.

God acts, therefore, because He exists. He is absolute activity, the source of all action, even as He is absolute existence, the source of all existence. And this perfect action, like this perfect existence, results immediately from His essence. God is therefore absolute liberty on the same ground that He is absolute activity and absolute existence. True liberty, in fact, consists in an activity, which is not determined by any extraneous cause, which determines itself, and is only developed by the necessity of its nature.<sup>1</sup>

The vulgar have another idea of liberty. They imagine it to consist in the choice of motives, in the power of not doing that which we do. This is not the type of liberty. It is indeed only an illusion. We act, and we are conscious that we act; but we are not conscious of the causes which determine us to act in a given manner. Hence the chimera of free will;<sup>2</sup> hence the prejudice that indetermination of the will makes the essence of liberty. But this prejudice is the overthrow of reason. We are only truly free when we affirm something clear and distinct, like this: two and

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Part I. Prop. XVII., Schol cf. Def. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, Part I. Appen.; Part II. Prop. XLVIII.

two make four:<sup>1</sup> for here the action of thought is not determined by any extraneous cause, but by the very nature of thought.

His strange doctrine of liberty.

Such is Spinoza's ideal of liberty. And he is so satisfied with the solidity of his doctrine, so little concerned with the objection which can be made of his joining two contradictory ideas in his notion of liberty, that he seems to play with this pretended opposition, and to fling a defiance to common sense in this strange formula: "In my eyes," he writes to Louis Meyer, "liberty is not in the free purpose, but in a free necessity."<sup>2</sup>

God, then, is the Being who is perfectly free, since the development of His activity, like His existence, results from the absolute necessity of His essence. In this way, that which in the opinion of men destroys liberty, is, according to Spinoza, its foundation, and the distinctive feature of free will is to him a demonstration of its vanity, so that in his eyes the height of liberty is in the complete abolition of the will.

Triple conclusion on the Divine nature.

God, argues Spinoza, has no more a will than He has an understanding, and for precisely similar reasons. First the will, as prescinded from volitions, is a chimerical entity. Will consists entirely in a set of volitions—but a series of volitions, even if infinite, is only a series of modes of activity, and not activity itself. Absolute activity is an eternal, not a successive act. It is simple, not composed of diverse acts. It is necessary, not determined by extraneous causes. Finally, it is perfect, and free

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Blyenberg*, Vol. II., p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter XXIX.*, Vol. III., p. 437.

from the limitations, the uncertainties, and the fluctuations of human activity. Spinoza finally ends with this triple consequence—(1.) That the perfection of the Divine extension is the foundation of its indivisibility; (2.) That the perfection of the Divine thought sets it free from the limitations of the understanding; and, (3.) That the perfection of the Divine liberty emancipates it from the conditions of the will. And he terminates the first book of the *Ethica* with this lofty sentence, which he pronounces with perfect serenity: “*I have explained the nature of God.*”

It is generally believed that Spinoza has not placed any intermediate existence between God and the universe in his system—and I admit that this is the simplest and most natural mode of construing his doctrine. This prejudice is, however, erroneous, and it is necessary to remove it, in order to know how far Spinoza has abused logic and abstraction.

Spinoza places intermediaries between God and the universe.

Undoubtedly, he distinguishes at first only three orders of existence, substance, the attribute, and the mode. But he soon introduces two sorts of modes—modes, properly so called, variable, finite, successive, which constitute souls and bodies—and again other modes of quite a different nature, eternal, infinite, more closely linked to substance than souls and bodies.

One would say that Spinoza labours to multiply modes of this nature, as if he were terrified at the infinite void which his doctrine leaves between God and the world, and had it at heart to fill up the chasm. In this point of view, the Pantheism of the *Ethica*, in spite of its essentially geometrical



and abstract character, seems to resemble the ancient doctrine of emanations.

It must further be admitted that Spinoza has not developed, with his usual precision, this sufficiently singular side of his system. He hardly indicates it in two or three Propositions of the first book of the *Ethica*, when he passes on, and does not return to the subject; and when his friends press him for an explanation, he hardly answers at all, and only in a way which is almost evasive.<sup>1</sup> It seems as if one would never see clearly in this obscurity.

Spinoza expressly distinguishes two sorts of eternal and infinite modes of the Divine substance—those which flow from the absolute nature of an attribute of God, (and he gives as his example the idea of God)<sup>2</sup>—and, below these modes, those which are derived from them, and are thus separated from substance by two intermediaries, the attribute and the immediate mode of the attribute. Spinoza, at least in the *Ethica*, gives no example of this second species of eternal and infinite modes, and upon this grave and difficult point, we are almost reduced to conjectures drawn from his correspondence with his friends.

One thing which is certain is, that Spinoza was led to establish intermediaries between God and the universe, by a logical necessity, inherent in his system. For instance, let us place ourselves with him, at the particular point of view from which he contemplates the subject of Thought. We find, first and foremost, the absolute Thought,

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Meyer*, Vol. II., p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> *De Deo*, Prop. XXI.

the Thought of God, which has God alone for its object. This is the highest degree, the loftiest function of thought: When we pass down the scale to the lower degrees, we find souls. But souls are ideas. And every particular idea has a particular object, namely, the body to which it is united. True that there is an infinite number of souls, or of ideas, as there is an infinite number of bodies. But neither the infinite number of particular determinations of thought, nor absolute thought, exhaust the being of thought. Does not thought, in fact, imply the idea of God; and does not the idea of God imply the idea of each of the attributes of God? But, all these ideas differ essentially, both from thought in itself, and from the limited determination of thought. In fact, the idea of God is not thought in itself, but the first of its manifestations. While thought in itself is absolutely undetermined, the idea of God is, in a certain sense, determined. On the other hand, the idea of God is eternal and infinite—infinite, for it comprehends all other ideas; eternal, because it is a perfectly simple and necessary emanation from the divine Thought. It cannot, therefore, be confounded with those changing and finite ideas which compose souls.

Here, then, is a first series of intermediaries logically explained. Now, from the idea of God, which results immediately from the divine Thought, Spinoza brings out another series of modifications, equally eternal and infinite. I apprehend that I represent his view correctly, in citing as an example the idea of the extension of God. This

idea is simple, and, consequently, eternal; it is infinite, for it embraces all the ideas which correspond to all the modes of infinite extension. And yet it is not an immediate emanation from the divine Thought; for the idea of the extension of God gives us, as an immediate inference, the idea of God, and, mediately only, the divine Thought.

All this is, perhaps, correctly deduced. But how far is it, as yet, from being clear? I am not sure that I am not wrong, and that the interpretation which occurs to my mind, of one of the obscurest and most important points in Spinoza's doctrine, is not a little precarious. But the more I reflect upon the subject, the more persuaded I am that this manner of understanding Spinoza is true.

God, and His infinite attributes, Thought and Extension, with all the other attributes, infinite in number, unknown to mortal eyes—this is the *natura naturans*. What is the first degree in the *natura naturata*? In the order of thought, it is the idea of God.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of God is not the idea of substance; for then it would be confounded with infinite Thought, and would form part of the *natura naturans*. But infinite Thought is not an idea, but the foundation of all ideas; it is absolutely undetermined, and has for its object only absolutely undetermined being, substance. The idea of God is, therefore, the idea of the attributes of God. I conceive that this is why Spinoza makes it the first emanation from Thought;

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Part I., Prop. xxi.

for what the thought of substance immediately implies, is the idea of the attributes of substance. In the same way I explain it to myself, that the idea of God belongs to the *natura naturata*, and not, like thought, to the *natura naturans*. In fact, the thought of substance is simple and undetermined. On the contrary, there is clearly determination and variety in the idea of the attributes of substance. It is thus an established point, that the idea of God is the idea of the attributes of God, or, as Spinoza also calls Him, the infinite Understanding.

But what is the idea of God, or the infinite Mind? The infinite Mind comprises an infinity of ideas, for it comprises the idea of each of the attributes of God, and there is an infinity of them. Each of these ideas—for instance, the idea of extension—is an immediate emanation from the idea of God, as the idea of God is an immediate emanation from the thought of God, as the thought of God, in its turn, is an immediate emanation from the essence of God. Outside the idea of extension, we know yet another idea, that of thought. In the idea of God must be the idea of all the attributes of God, and Thought is one of those attributes.

Thought is, in its nature, representative. It only exists upon the condition of having an object, and it is this characteristic which distinguishes it from the other attributes of substance. Extension, for instance, expresses nothing, and contains nothing, but itself. Taken in itself, it has no relation but to itself. But thought, in one sense, expresses and contains all the forms of Being.

It Thought  
is All, in a  
sense.

In a certain fashion, it is extension. For thought is objectively what extension is formally ; and, in this sense, thought is all.

Absolute thought, therefore, thinks itself.

But if thought embraces and comprehends all the perfections of substance, it should also comprehend itself ; for it is itself a perfection of substance. Absolute thought, therefore, thinks itself, and there is, consequently, an idea of Thought.

Thought and Extension the only ideas known to us, as comprised in the idea of God.

Of all the ideas, comprised in infinite number in the idea of God, here are the two sole ideas which we positively know. And now, what is contained in each of these ideas of each of the attributes of God ; for instance, the idea of extension ? It contains the idea of all the modalities of extension. This idea, in the language of Spinoza, is, therefore, a soul, a particular soul joined to a particular body. The idea of extension, then, enfolds all souls ; it is, literally, the soul of the corporeal world. It is a universal soul, conceived in the fashion of the Cabbala and of Alexandria, a central soul, from which all individual souls are emanations. Or rather, it is an infinite ocean of souls and of ideas. Every idea, every soul, is a great river running into this ocean ; every thought is a wave of it.

The universal soul of the corporeal world is the idea of extension.

The universal soul of the infinite universe is the idea of God.

This is not all. We must follow out these strange and curious analogies. We have just seen that the idea of extension is the soul of the corporeal world. But the idea of extension is itself a particular emanation from a principle which contains an infinity of them, a river running into a vaster ocean. The idea of extension, with the idea of thought, and an infinity of ideas of the same degree, is enfolded in the idea of God.

The idea of God is no longer the soul of the universe which we know. It is the soul of that infinity of the universe, to which the incomprehensible fecundity of Being incessantly gives birth. It is truly the soul of the world, taking the world in that extensive sense, in which the universe that we know, the universe of souls and bodies, of matter and mind, is no more than an imperceptible atom.

Spinoza here seems to gaze with complacency upon this truly grand and imposing conception of the order of things. What is man? A soul joined to a body. This soul is slightly acquainted with itself, and slightly with the body to which it is united, and, consequently, with other bodies which may act upon its own. This is the circle, whose narrow rim girds in our knowledge. But this limited universe, which our senses make us see, and in which we occupy so small a place, is only a point in the infinite universe of souls and bodies. And this infinite universe—whose infinity overwhelms us, which our senses know not, which our reason conceives without embracing—is itself dwarfed into infinite littleness, when we reflect that it is only one portion of an infinity of similar universes, which are developed by the side of our own, with an infinity of modifications. The idea of extension enfolds our universe; it, in turn, is enfolded by the idea of God, which contains all possible universes. And, finally, God enfolds this infinity of the universe in His thought, and His thought itself in His substance, which is the last foundation, and container of all.<sup>1</sup>

Grand total of Spinoza's Theology or Pantheism. The idea of extension enfolds our universe, itself contained by the idea of God, which contains the infinity of the universe. All this enfolded in God's thought, and God's thought in His substance.

<sup>1</sup> I have thus understood Spinoza, ever since I attempted to trans-

I confess, once more, that there is singular grandeur in this edifice of accumulated abstractions. I will, by way of argument, admit for a moment such a view of Deity, and of the origin of things, as is here given, and I will proceed to examine its results on the moral and religious life of humanity.

Spinoza's  
anthro-  
pology.

What is man, in the system of Spinoza? Man is a soul united to a body. As a soul, he is a mode of the thought of God. As a body, he is a mode of His extension. The Divine thought, being a form of absolute activity, must develop itself in an infinite series of thoughts, or of ideas, or, again, of particular souls. But, again, it implies a contradiction, that any idea, any soul, in short, any mode of thought, should possibly exist externally to thought itself. Consequently, all which thinks, in whatever degree, and in whatever way it thinks, in other words, every soul, is a mode of the Divine thought, an idea of God.

Every soul  
an idea of  
God.  
The in-  
finite de-  
velopment  
of souls,  
and of  
corporeal  
nature, *i.e.*,  
thought  
and exten-  
sion, ex-  
press the  
essence of  
God.

But, what is expressed by this infinite series of souls, and of ideas, which necessarily flow from the Divine thought? It expresses the essence of God. And what else is expressed by the infinite development of corporeal nature, but the infinite and perfect essence of God? Extension, no doubt, expresses the essence of God very differently from thought, and hence, the necessary

late and explain him. After new reflections and studies, I persist in my interpretation; and I persist in it with the more confidence, because several recent publications concur in bringing out considerable relations between the doctrines of Spinoza, and traditions, Jewish or Alexandrian. See the *Animadversiones* discovered at Hanover by M. Foucher de Careil, and the *Guide des Égarés* [*Moré Neboukhim, Doctor Perplexorum*] of Moses Maimonides, first translated into French by M. S. Munk.

difference of these two things. But both express the same perfection, and the same infinity, and hence, their necessary connection.

Consequently, for each mode of the Divine extension there is a correspondent mode of the Divine thought, and as Spinoza says in a celebrated theorem: the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things.<sup>1</sup> But, just as extension and thought are not two substances, but one only, considered under two points of view, so a mode of extension, and the idea of that mode, are only one and the same thing, expressed in two different manners. For instance, a circle which exists in nature, and the idea of such a circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing expressed relatively to two different attributes. "And here," adds Spinoza, possibly pointing at the Cabbalists,<sup>2</sup> "is something which appears to have been perceived dimly, as if through a mist, by certain Hebrews, who maintain that God, the intelligence of God, and the things which it conceives, only make one thing."

It is now easy to define man in the system of Spinoza. Man is the identity in God of the human soul, and the human body. The human soul, in fact, is nothing but a mode of the Divine substance; so is the human body in another way. These two ways are different, in so far as they express the Divine perfection differently, one in the order of thought, the other in the order of extension. But, in so far as they

<sup>1</sup> *De Anima*, Prop. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Or more probably at the Jewish disciples of Avicenna. See the *Guide des Égarés*, vol. i., p. 301, sqq.



represent one and the same *moment* of the eternal development of the infinite activity, they are identical. What God is, as body, at a specific point of His progress, He thinks as soul; and so we have man! The human body is only the object of the human soul; the human soul is only the idea of the human body. The human soul and the human body are only one being with two faces; they are, so to speak, one and the same ray of the Divine light, which is decomposed and doubled when it is reflected in the consciousness.

Definition  
of soul.

If the human soul corresponds exactly to the human body, as the latter is a compound of molecules, so the former must be a compound of ideas. Spinoza avowedly grants this conclusion, and he defines the soul, as "an idea compounded of various ideas." How can the human soul, thus conceived, have faculties? The thing is impossible. A faculty supposes a subject. The variety of faculties, in one and the same being, requires a common centre of identity and of life. But the human soul is not strictly a being, a thing; it is a pure mode, a pure collection of ideas, and the reality of a collection is resolved into that of its constitutive elements. We need not, therefore, look for powers or faculties in the human soul; we shall only find ideas.

What are commonly called intellect and will are *entia rationis*, pure abstractions, hypostatized by the vulgar. In truth, there is nothing real, but such a determinate thought or volition. But the idea and the volition are not two things, but one only; and Descartes is wrong in distinguishing them. According to him, the will is more

extensive than the understanding, and this necessary disproportion accounts for the nature and the possibility of error. But it is not so. To will, is to affirm. But it is as impossible to perceive without affirming, as to affirm without perceiving. An idea is not a mere image, a mute figure traced upon a picture. It is a living concept of thought. It is an act. The vulgar suppose that a man can oppose his will to his thought. What, in this case, he really opposes to his thought, is a set of purely verbal affirmations or negations. Conceive God, and try to deny His existence; you will never succeed. Whoever denies God only thinks of the name. The extent of the will is, therefore, commensurate with that of the understanding. It is all very well for Descartes to say, that if God pleased to give us a vaster understanding, He would not be obliged, for all that, to enlarge the circle of our will. But this is assuming that the will is something, one and distinct, whereas the will resolves itself into volitions, just as the understanding resolves into ideas. Therefore, the will is not infinite, but compound and limited, like the understanding. There is no volition without thought, and no thought without volition. Thought is the idea considered as representative; volition is the idea considered as active. In real life, in the natural complexity of the idea, thought and action are identified.

Intellect  
and will  
not objec-  
tive enti-  
ties.

If this theory of the soul is true; if my soul is only a set of ideas, as my body is only a bundle of particles; if this series of ideas is regulated by an eternal law, as necessary as that which links

General re-  
sult of this  
psychology  
—"The  
soul is a  
spiritual  
automa-  
ton."

the motions of my body and those of the whole universe; the psychology of Spinoza may be summed up in one sentence—and that sentence he has himself pronounced—"The human soul is a spiritual automaton."<sup>1</sup>

Morality  
annihilated.

And now can it be understood how the great moral problem was ever so much as put in the system of Spinoza? Here is that problem: How should man regulate his life to render it conformable to right? The simple enunciation of this problem manifestly supposes two conditions: (1) that man is capable of regulating his life, of directing his conduct as he will, in a word, that man is free; (2) that there exists a moral good, an obligatory good, to which man should conform his actions.

Free-will,  
and moral  
order, de-  
nied.

I question Spinoza upon these two points—free will and moral order. His thought is as clear, keen, and resolute upon one as the other. He denies both, not once, but almost in every page, and always with such unshaken energy, and such calm and profound conviction, that one's mind is confounded, and as it were scared. Free will and the moral sentiment of good and evil are, after all, only *facts*; and between facts and a logical exigence Spinoza never hesitates. Whether he considers the Divine nature, the character of its eternal development, and the universal order of things, or whether he dwells upon the essence of the human soul, its connection with the body, the diverse elements of its nature and motives of its actions; all seems to him to be fatal, necessary, regulated by an inflexible law,

<sup>1</sup> *De Intell. Emend.*, ii., p. 306.

and free-will, whether in God or in man, appears equally inconceivable.

At this point I should say to Spinoza, Why go on? I have no wish to follow you further. Why do you propose to me a morality whose conditions you have previously annihilated? Spinoza appears to have foreseen this disposition on the part of the reader. Contrary to his usual habit, he interrupts himself, and for this time derogating from the impersonal character of his geometrical exposition, he writes these words: "Here, undoubtedly, readers are likely to be brought to a stand-still, and a mass of things will come into their memory, which will hinder them from proceeding. This is why I request them to pursue their way slowly with me, and to suspend their judgment, until they have read the whole."

Spinoza desires judgment upon his ethical system to be suspended.

Let us then proceed, since Spinoza requests us to do so, and let us see by what series of distinctions and reasonings he has succeeded in deceiving himself upon the radical vanity of his attempt.

Examination of his ethical system.

Spinoza, as an absolute fatalist, could not recognise the ideas of good and evil, perfection and imperfection, taken in the *moral* significance given to them by the consciousness of the human race. It is true that in a purely *metaphysical* sense Spinoza might well enough give them a certain position in his teaching, prescinding from them free-will and human responsibility.

The ideas of good and evil practically overthrown.

Substance, which is his God, he also calls perfect Being; and that we can understand. If it be asked in what His perfection consists? he would answer, in the infinity of His being. God's attributes are also perfect things. Why so?

Ideas of good and evil in his metaphysical sense.

Because, if we consider only the kind of being which belongs to them, nothing is wanting to their completeness. But when compared with Being in itself, their borrowed and relative perfection is eclipsed before the uncreated perfection. The infinite number of modes which emanate from the Divine attributes do but contain a yet fainter perfection, though each, in proportion to the precise degree of its being, expresses the absolute perfection of Being in itself. Absolute perfection has therefore a place in the teachings of Spinoza; as also has relative perfection in all its degrees, which implies a necessary intermixture of imperfection. Only perfection does not differ from being. It relates to it, and is measured by it, and the scale of the degrees of perfection is exactly that of the degrees of being.

Man's good  
is utility.

What is, according to Spinoza, *good* in the case of man? *Utility*; and utility is that which promotes joy, or which removes sorrow. But what are joy and sorrow? Joy is the passage of the soul to a higher perfection, sorrow its passage to a lesser perfection.<sup>1</sup> In other language, joy is satisfied desire,<sup>2</sup> sorrow is thwarted desire. And all desire may be brought under one fundamental desire, the desire of continuing in

<sup>1</sup> [The reader may compare a definition in Aristotle's Rhetoric. He calls pleasure *κίνησις τινα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ κατάστασις ἀθρόαν καὶ αἰσθητὴν εἰς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν φύσιν λύπην δὲ τοῦναντίον*. "Pleasure is a sudden and sensible motion (or perceptible state of transition) of the soul towards that which is natural, and pain the contrary."—*Rhetor.* I. 11, 2. It should be remembered, however, that this is a mere popular definition. In the *Ethica*, he proves that it is not a *κίνησις* but an *ἐνέργεια*.]

<sup>2</sup> [There is a *verbal* agreement between this and a definition of pleasure refuted by Aristotle—*τὴν μὲν λύπην ἐνδεῖαν τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν εἶναι*,

being. Thus, every human soul has a precise degree of being, or of perfection, which constitutes it, and which of itself has a tendency to maintain itself. That which augments the being or perfection of the soul produces joy, is useful, is good for it. That which diminishes the being, or perfection of the soul, causes it sorrow, is injurious and evil in its estimation. Consequently, perfection and imperfection, good and evil, exist in human nature as in all things else. The life of man is a series of successive states, which may be compared, measured, and valued, in relation to perfection and good—all this, however, without in the slightest degree taking into account free-will, desert,<sup>1</sup> and sin, just as if he were describing plants or minerals.

Spinoza, then, has a right to put this question—what is the most perfect life for man? For that means, what is the life in which the soul has most joy, that is most perfection, that is most being?

Spinoza puts the moral question thus—What is man's most perfect life?

Having put the problem thus, Spinoza first proves that the most perfect life is that which is most conformed, not to blind appetite, but to desire enlightened by reason—in short, the most reasonable. He then proceeds to examine what this most reasonable life is. And as the soul, in his eyes, is essentially an idea, he has no difficulty in demonstrating that the most reasonable life is

His answer is—The most rational life.

τὴν δ' ἡδονὴν ἀναπλήρωσιν.—*Ethic.* X. 3, 6. Aristotle's own definition is, that pleasure is *ἐνέργεια τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἔξεως ἀνεμπόδιστος*, the unimpeded operation or energy of a state consonant to nature.—*Ethica*, VII. 12.]

<sup>1</sup> [*Merite*.—"Our sense or discernment of actions as morally good or evil, implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of good or ill desert."—*Butler's Dissertation on Nature of Virtue*.

To see all  
in God is  
the secret.

that in which it has the most clear and distinct ideas; that is, where it knows itself and other things best. But what means have we of knowing things clearly and distinctly? This—to form a chain of our ideas whose first ring shall be the idea of God, to think unceasingly of God, to see all in God. When we have reached this point, all the rest necessarily follows. For our desires are necessarily conformed to our thoughts, and our actions to our desires. He, then, who has referred all his thoughts to the idea of God, in virtue of this has reduced all his desires to one, that of possessing God. He loves God, he lives in God. Life in God is, therefore, the best and most perfect life, because it is the most reasonable, the happiest, the fullest—in short, because it gives us more being than any other life, and more completely satisfies the fundamental desire which constitutes our essence.

In this consists religion and morality.

Such is the morality, and at the same time the religion of Spinoza. For with him religion is not fundamentally distinguished from morality, and it is contained whole and entire in this precept:—“Love your fellows and God.” But the love of our neighbours is a natural and necessary consequence from the love of God. What is the cause of all the hatred and violence which exist among men? The appetite which pushes them on to objects, whose possession is uncertain, and which cannot be divided. But reason pacifies all our passions by elevating them to their true object, and the sublime privilege of this Divine object is, that He gives Himself entirely to us, and far from being weakened is augmented by a common posses-

sion.<sup>1</sup> "The love of God cannot be sullied by any feeling of envy or jealousy. And He is more strongly received by us, in proportion as we represent to ourselves a greater number of men as united with God, in one and the same bond of charity."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the love of God is the principle, at once of morality, of religion, and of society. It tends to reunite men in one family, and to make one soul of all souls by the community of one only love. So, then, he who loves himself with a reasonable love,<sup>3</sup> loves God and his neighbours, and it is in God that he loves his neighbours and himself. This is the true Divine law, inseparable from natural law. This is the immortal original of which the various religions of the earth are but mutable and perishable copies.

Has this law a sanction beyond our terrestrial existence? Is the idea of a future life conceived in the system of Spinoza? Here my difficulties at once return. How can one comprehend that a philosopher who broadly denies moral responsibility should recognise the necessity of an existence to come? Even if we suppose this necessary existence, how is it possible? The human soul is, with Spinoza, the idea of the human body. When death shatters the bonds of organic life, the soul must share the fortune of the body, and like it be decomposed, being composed like it.

Besides this, let us consider the faculties of the human soul—memory, for instance, the necessary condition of individuality in a being whose exist-

What of a future existence?

Spinoza's view of the faculties of the human soul excludes future personal identity.

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Part IV., Prop. XXXVI.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, De Lib., Part V., Prop. XX.

<sup>3</sup> [Every student of Butler will remember the stress which he lays upon "cool, reasonable self-love."]



ence is successive. Spinoza defines "it, an inter-linked series of ideas which expresses the nature of exterior things, following the order and same series of affections in the human body."<sup>1</sup> Memory, therefore, exists in the soul, only as long as the body exists. But without memory, where is personal identity?

Far from closing his eyes to all these consequences, Spinoza himself deduces them with his accustomed rigour. "We have shown," he says, "that that power of the soul by which it imagines and recalls things, depends upon this one point, that the soul envelopes the natural existence of the body. But from all this it follows that the present existence of the soul, and its power of imagining are destroyed as soon as the soul ceases to affirm the present existence of the body."

Immortality illogically drawn by Spinoza from his premisses.

After these express declarations; upon considering in turn the general spirit of Spinoza's philosophy, his particular theory of the soul, and his own avowals; would it not seem that the laws of logic, which he almost always so rigidly observes, would constrain him to reject equally the metaphysical and the moral immortality of the soul? Yet he professes to admit positively both one and the other. In fact, he declares that the human soul, if not entire, at least in its better portion, is naturally immortal, and that the life to come, far from excluding personality, supposes it, since it is a life purified from all the miseries of our earthly condition, a life of liberty, love, and blessedness.

Explanation of Spinoza's inconsistency.

How shall we explain these oscillations of a thinker usually so firm and straightforward? The

<sup>1</sup> *De Animâ*, Prop. XVIII. and Schol.

following (allowing for a possibility of mistake) appears to me to be, at bottom, the meaning of Spinoza.

The human soul is an idea, an idea of God, the idea of the human body. As an idea of God, the human soul is an eternal mode of the eternal intellect of God. By virtue of this, it does not fall under the condition of time, and its existence is immutable. By virtue of this also it does not perceive things under the form of duration, that is to say, in a manner which is successive and always incomplete, but under the form of eternity, that is to say, in their immanent relation to substance.

In this point of view, the human soul is a pure intelligence, all compact of clear and distinct ideas; consequently, altogether active and altogether happy, in short, altogether in God. But the absolute necessity of the Divine nature wills that every soul in its turn should furnish its career in time, and be a partaker of the vicissitudes of the body which it represents. From the eternal life it falls into the shadows of this terrestrial condition. Here it is exiled among the beings of nature, and in some sort separated from the bosom of God. Henceforth subjected to the law of change and of time, it only perceives things in their temporal and mutable part, and regains with difficulty the eternal link which binds it to God, to the entire universe, and to itself. It does, however, regain it, and surmounting by a sublime effort the weight of its corporeal chains, it finds again at moments the infinite good which it has lost, which it bewails, and which it feels itself one day destined to regain.

The human soul, therefore, is perishable, so far

Spinoza's theory that the passive faculties perish, but the reason remains.

as it envelopes the actual existence of the human body. The senses, the memory, the imagination, the passive faculties, which are appropriate to a successive and changeful existence, perish with the body. They carry away with them our obscure and confused ideas ; that is, all the wretched train of our passions, our prejudices, and our errors. But reason subsists, that reason which, even in this temporal life, made us perceive things under the form of eternity, that excellent portion of ourselves, which incessantly leads us back to our true object, and is to us at once a reminiscence and a presentiment of our true condition.

Besides, it is far from being the case that all souls are invited to possess felicity with the same fulness. And here Spinoza finds in his own way that great law of an avenging and retributive justice, which has in all times been admitted by the human race.

His theory of future misery and future happiness.

Reason, clear and distinct ideas, remain after death. All else perishes. Souls who are governed by reason, philosophic souls, who even in this world live in God, are above death ; all that death takes away from them is of no value. But there are feeble and darkened souls, where reason barely casts some feeble glimmerings—souls composed well-nigh altogether of vain images and of unworthy passions. Such souls perish almost entirely. Death, instead of being to them a simple accident, reaches to the very depths of their being. Spinoza draws from it the excellent conclusion, that in proportion as we render our soul purer and more reasonable, we increase our right to immortality, and prepare for ourselves a happier destiny.

He observes in closing his *Ethica*: "The principles which I have established, make us clearly see the excellence of the sage, and his superiority over the ignorant soul, who is led by blind passion. The latter, besides being tossed about a thousand ways by exterior causes, and never coming into possession of true peace of soul, lives in forgetfulness of himself, of God, and of all things. For him, to cease to suffer is to cease to be. On the contrary, the soul of the sage can scarcely be troubled. Possessing by a sort of eternal necessity the consciousness of himself, and of God, and of all things, he never ceases to be, and he possesses for ever true peace of soul."



## OBJECTIONS.

Into what an abyss of reflections am I thrown by this strange system, this regular tissue of monstrous ideas, where so many glimmerings of truth shine among the most revolting errors! What conviction, what faith, what secret fervour, do I feel throbbing under this arid geometry! Certainly, if Pantheism be truth, the truth has never found a soul better constituted for giving itself up to her, or a more luminous thought to reflect her. But *is* Pantheism the truth? This is a grave question, to the depth of which I feel that I cannot yet penetrate. I will only now note, as I pass, what stops and perplexes me in following the speculations of Spinoza.

Erroneous-  
ness of Spi-  
noza's me-  
thod.

My first doubt bears upon his *method*. It appears to me that this method, apparently so rigorous, is in reality purely arbitrary. I believe that it is even absolutely inapplicable; and if I rightly understand the movement of his system, in order to advance he is obliged at every step to contradict his own method.

He mutilates the human intellect by eliminating experience.

In what does that method consist? In the employment of pure reason and of deductive reasoning, to the exclusion of experience. But what can be more arbitrary than such an exclusion? The human mind has a certain number of organs at command, equally natural, equally necessary and legitimate; on the one hand, the senses, consciousness, in a word, experience, with induction which rests upon and fertilizes experience; on the other side, pure reason and reasoning. What right has he to banish from science so much as one of these means of knowing the truth? What advantages can be hoped from doing so? To do so, indeed, is to lessen and to mutilate the human mind.

Artificial division of inseparable elements.

I remark, besides, that our different intellectual proceedings are not in reality separated, nor even separable. It has over and over again been demonstrated that the separation of the pure reason and the senses is an artificial work. Man is never purely intellectual any more than simply animal. The senses are not exercised without reason. Reason is not unfolded independently of the senses. In every judgment and in every thought, the grossest as well as the most refined, an exact analysis discovers two elements which are closely united—one *empirical*, the other *ra-*

*tional*, a datum *à posteriori* and a concept *à priori*. To separate the pure reason from the senses is, therefore, to break the natural union of our intellectual faculties. It is to place oneself in a false and arbitrary position. It is to examine things from one particular point of view. It is to renounce reality in order to run after chimeras. Spinoza is of that family of thorough-paced speculative men, who believe in absolute, perfect, adequate homogeneous science; who are for explaining and deducing everything, and who wish to produce the absolute sum-total of things in the system of their constructions.

There is, perhaps, one sure mode of stopping these imperious reasoners; and that is to call them to account upon their first principle, and to make them see that they can neither postulate it, nor, after having arbitrarily postulated it, take a single step beyond.

This separation of the *à priori* and *à posteriori* elements shown to be false by an examination of "substance."

I turn to Spinoza in particular, and I ask him from whence he takes his principle; that is to say, substance or being in-itself, and by itself. I ask if this notion represents in his eyes (1) something absolutely undetermined, without life and activity; or (2) something active and living?

Dilemma to the Spinozist upon substance.

In case the notion of substance represents active and living being, it evidently does not come from the pure reason, which only gives absolute being in general; it is experience which makes us see being in action, living being. Take away the senses and the consciousness, and all idea of life and action expires—you are face to face with undetermined being.

Does substance mean something active and living? Then the notion must come from experience.

But, if you start from undetermined Being,

Does substance mean undetermined Being? Then the idea of the attribute cannot be validly drawn without experience.

what can you derive from such an abstraction? Absolutely nothing. It may be objected that Being has necessarily attributes which express and determine its essence. But I would ask from whence you can have drawn this notion of attributes, if experience had not taught you that the actual beings of nature have precise attributes, qualities, and determinations, by which they are distinguished one from the other, and become intelligible and palpable. And even supposing that you could deduce the general idea of attribute from the general idea of Being, *à priori*, and without the aid of experience, you would not have advanced a step further. For what can be emptier and hollower than the idea of an attribute in general, of a purely possible attribute, and how can this kind of attribute be determined? For you must mean to say, in the end, that substance has not attributes in general, but such and such real attributes, say thought and extension. But is it not evident, that all the resources of abstract reasoning are impotent to make the precise notion of thought come out from the vague and undetermined notion of Being in itself? Do what you will, you must here recur to experience. And why deceive oneself and others? In all truth, when you reduce the determinable attributes of substance to two—thought and extension—is it not *consciousness* to which you turn, to give you the notion of *thought*, and *sense* from which you borrow the notion of *extension*? There is here either an illusion or a subterfuge; and these two things are unworthy of a true philosopher. It must, then, be allowed that experience is absolutely necessary in every scientific work, that it is

as legitimate as reasoning and reason. But this once granted, you go on to tell us that all the forms of existence are reducible to three—substance, attribute, and mode; as all the dimensions of extension are reducible to three—length, bulk, and depth; laying that down as a principle *a priori*, an incontestable position, anterior and superior to experience. Again, you go on to say, that, in spite of the evidence of our inward consciousness, we must admit that the soul is only a mode of the Divine substance, and has neither unity nor liberty. But, when you make these assertions, we would remind you that you yourself have had need of that very experience, which you defy so boldly, to give life and movement to your own principle, and that by this very fact you have lost all right to disavow it.

Let us leave the region of abstractions, and speak of that which you call God. I propose to you this dilemma:—

Dilemma upon Spinoza's notion of God.

Either your God is all, in such sort that there is, and that there can be, but one only person, one sole individual, who is God:

Or your God is only a dead and unreal abstraction, in such sort, that there are no real beings but the finite and determined beings who compose nature.

I believe that this dilemma is valid against all Pantheists whatsoever: I shall endeavour, in this place, to establish it against Spinoza in particular.

There are, in his system, but three possible definitions of God—

Three possible definitions of God, according to Spinoza.

1. God is substance.

2. God is substance, *plus* His two infinite attributes, thought and extension.



3. God is substance, *plus* His two infinite attributes, thought and extension, *plus* the infinite series of the modes of these attributes. Between these three, his choice must be made.

I. God=  
substance.  
Validity of  
dilemma  
upon this  
hypothesis.

I. If God is substance without attribute, it follows that He is absolutely undetermined Being. But that is a pure abstraction, from whence nothing can come. Do you consider thought as a perfection, or as an imperfection? Spinoza sometimes appears to believe that thought is the highest realization, and most finished perfection of the Divine being, while, again, he says roundly, *omnis determinatio negatio est*; and this latter principle places supreme perfection in supreme indetermination, and leads us to consider every attribute, even the sublime attribute of thought, as a falling away from being.

(α) If  
thought  
be a per-  
fection.

(α) But if thought, according to you, is a perfection, it follows that your God, being without thought, is an imperfect god. It follows, further, that thought, which is a perfection, has as its principle, substance, which is inferior to itself, since it is abstract and undetermined being. So that, if you admit that thought is a perfection, you have two inevitable absurdities, an imperfect God, and perfection arising from imperfection.

(β) If  
thought  
be an im-  
perfection.

(β) Admit the opposite doctrine, which, with the Mystics and Pantheists of all ages, you reduce to the formula, *omnis determinatio negatio est*; and I wish to know how determination and negation penetrate to the bosom of substance. You suppose it perfect in its undetermined existence. Then you pretend that it assumes attributes; that it determines, that is to say, that it denies

itself, that it degenerates. That is inconceivable, and more, it is contradictory. How could the absolutely perfect being become imperfect by determining itself? It is, you say, an absolute *necessity*. That is a big word, intended to palliate a perfectly arbitrary hypothesis. Certainly, granting your system, there is no other way of explaining the passage of substance to attribute, of the undetermined to the determined, of the abstract to the concrete; there is no other way than the hypothesis of an absolute necessity, supposed without proof and explanation. But it is just this desperate hypothesis, at once radically absurd, and at the same time indispensable to Pantheism, which turns to its utter condemnation.

Further, this inconceivable and arbitrary hypothesis directly implies a contradiction. You lay down substance as the Positive Absolute. You say that every attribute, being a determination, is something negative, and you, at the same time, assert that substance necessarily produces attributes, or, in other words, necessarily determines itself. That is to say, that the positive absolute necessarily becomes negative, that *yes* necessarily becomes *no*. I know but one mode of covering the absurdity of this conclusion, that of generalising it, and intrepidly laying it down as a principle, under the high-sounding name of "the principle of the identity of contradictories." Pantheism, in our days, has reached this point. By the mouth of Hegel it has proclaimed the absolute identity of nothing and being, of the unit and zero. Unquestionably, it has become beyond power of refutation; but it is because it has taken away every

link to connect it with common sense, with any human thought, or with any human language!

II. God=  
substance,  
and  
thought  
and ex-  
tension.

II. Let us leave these aberrations, for which Spinoza is not responsible, and pass on from the first definition of God to the second.

"God is substance, *plus* its two infinite attributes, thought and extension." In reality, this definition hardly differs from the first, and tends, like it, to an indeterminate God, to a God who is nothing.

The attri-  
bute of  
thought  
considered.

Let us consider specially the attribute of thought. God is the infinitely thinking substance; this is His definition. But I ask Spinoza if this Divine thought is real, effective, self-conscious, rich in ideas, embracing distinctly all real and possible objects (for thus we understand things, when we recognise God as an intelligence); or if, on the contrary, God is thought undetermined, without consciousness, without ideas, thought, in general, which thinks nothing in particular. Spinoza most frequently adopts the latter alternative. He allows God thought, and refuses Him intelligence, *cogitationem Deo concedit non intellectum*. And, in fact, it is clear, that if Spinoza had admitted that the Divine thought is determined, inasmuch as, according to him, ideas and souls are the determinations of thought, he would have made the modes of thought enter into the *natura naturans*, and would have suppressed the *natura naturata*.<sup>1</sup> Spinoza has, therefore, been consistent in declaring that God, taken by Him-

<sup>1</sup> [*Natura naturans*, "prima causa," "Deus omnipotens." *Natura naturata*, "secunda causa," in scholastic language.—See *Sanderson de Oblig. Consc.*, v. 41.]

self, has no ideas; that He is not an intelligence. But then he must bear the brunt of all the absurdities already indicated. Either it must be asserted, that it is a perfection of the Divine thought to determine itself by ideas; and then the Divine thought is convicted of being imperfect, and perfection springs out of imperfection; or it must be asserted, that thought degenerates in determining itself by ideas, and then perfection becomes imperfect, being becomes nothing, affirmation becomes negation, the unit becomes zero.

III. Let us arrive at the last possible definition. It is clear, upon simply looking at this definition, that it tends to absorb nature entirely in God. God, in that case, becomes all which is, and all which can be, that is, substance, attributes, and modes. Outside these, there is nothing. Thus, all personality, and all individuality, in the moral, as in the physical world, are rent in pieces, and become fragments of the Divine individuality. And this consequence destroys itself, since Spinoza, who affirms God, can only do so, upon condition of distinguishing himself from Him, of placing himself in His presence, as a real subject, as a thinking and living individuality.

Thus, then, there is no middle conclusion. On the one hand, a God who is all, and absorbs all, whom a man cannot affirm without denying himself, and denying his affirmation; on the other hand, a God who is nothing, who is postulated as real, and immediately afterwards destroyed, either in making something absolutely undetermined of

III. God=  
substance  
plus  
thought  
and extension,  
plus  
the infinite  
series of  
the modes  
of those  
attributes.

<sup>1</sup> [The third definition.]

His thought, and of all His attributes,<sup>1</sup> or in refusing Him even these vague attributes,<sup>2</sup> and reducing Him to pure existence—decorated with the name of absolute existence—that is to say, to the emptiest of illusions.

Spinoza's  
anthro-  
pology.

In passing from God to man, and directing my attention to essential points, it seems to me that Spinoza has completely failed in his attempts to put in a saving clause in favour of morality, of the unity of our human personality, and of the immortality of the soul.

Denies  
moral  
liberty.

He begins by denying moral liberty in God. Then he denies it in man, in fact, and in right, as a reality, or as a possibility, in short, in every conceivable mode.

Professes  
to accept  
morality.

So far, I have only to take down his own declarations. But after having destroyed free-will, he professes to save morality. He understands that a system which denies right and duty, good and evil, is condemned by the universal conscience of mankind, and exhausts himself in subtle distinctions, and plausible combinations, for the purpose of satisfying it.

Virtue and  
duty im-  
possible.

Distinction  
between  
natural and  
moral good.

It is sufficient, I think, to oppose a very simple distinction between two sorts of goods to these artifices of reasoning. There is good in the order of nature, and good in the order of the will. The last is moral good properly so called. But we must not believe that moral good is good whole and entire. Order, harmony, strength, health, beauty, are assuredly goods, independent of the human will, and related to the sum total of the

<sup>1</sup> [The second definition.]

<sup>2</sup> [The first definition.]

universe. Not only is moral good not good whole and entire, taken generally and absolutely, but it is related to that as a conclusion to its principle, or as a species to its genus. To be virtuous is to do good. It is to pursue upon every occasion an end which is good in itself, so that moral good only exists and can be conceived as the realization by the human will of absolute and universal good.

This position once laid down, I turn to Spinoza, and press him thus: When you speak of good and evil generally, taking nature and not the will as your point of view: when you say that a vigorous is better than a sickly plant, that it is better for a man to have received from nature a good constitution than the reverse, a lucid and penetrating mind rather than an obtuse intellect: in short, when you introduce the notion of good and evil, perfection and imperfection, abstracting free-will, I understand up to a certain point that your system can admit these distinctions. But do not go further. From the moment that you pronounce the words virtue and vice, duty and right, you pass beyond your system. The question now is not of good in the universal order of nature, but of moral good, of good in the particular order of the will. On this platform, the distinction between good and evil acquires quite a different meaning; vice and virtue, right and duty, imply free-will. Suppress free-will in an individual, he may still be more or less good, in the sense of having an organization, more or less strong, more or less healthy, more or less beautiful and symmetrical. But to say that such a being has rights, that he is subject to duties, that he is virtuous or culpable,

is to abuse words, and to contradict oneself flagrantly.

The soul has no unity—it is a compost, or parcel, of ideas.

Let us see if Spinoza preserves for the human soul its unity at least. We know his definition of the human soul. It is, he says, a mode of the Divine thought, in intimate relation with a correspondent mode of the Divine extension—in other words, a human soul is the idea of a human body. It might seem at first sight that Spinoza, in saying that the soul is an idea, wished to retain for it, at least in words, that unity of which it has so living and distinct a sentiment by consciousness. Far otherwise; Spinoza hastens to add that the idea which constitutes a human soul is not one simple idea, but an idea composed of many ideas.

A reader might have some hesitation upon the meaning of this strange theory; he might believe that in defining a human soul, as the “idea of a human body,” Spinoza meant as follows: That there is in the human soul a principle of unity, a centre where the different ideas enclosed in the soul converge: just as in the human body, besides the tissues, the *viscera*, and the bones which form the sum total of the organs, there is an organic centre, a directing force which causes the union of the members, the harmony of the functions, the unity and identity of the human body. But nothing can be more inaccurate than this interpretation of Spinoza’s psychology, nothing more contrary to his express declarations. In his eyes, the human body is nothing but a collection of molecules, or, as he says, a complex mode of the Divine extension, formed by the junction of several simple modes. In the human body there is no active and

living centre, no vital force; the organic unity is only a unity of proportion. It is just the same with our soul. Its unity is similar to that of the body. It consists in the assemblage of a certain number of parts. These parts are simple ideas. Collect these ideas in a determinate relation, and you have a soul. Conceive a body equally compounded of simple particles, to be linked to this soul—and you have a man complete.

This theory of a soul without unity, of an *Ego* formed, so to say, of bits and scraps, has something so absurd about it, that many Pantheists might possibly attempt to save this principle of their system at Spinoza's expense. They might allege that nothing forced that philosopher to deny the real and substantial unity of the *Ego*, and that his theory of the soul is but an accident, an error in detail, which in no way affects the general position of Pantheism. To reason in this way is to misapprehend Spinoza. In fact, he has never reasoned more logically from the fundamental principle of Pantheism than in his theory of the human soul. It is as clear as the day that Pantheism, and the real substantial unity of the *Ego*, are two incompatible things. The essence of Pantheism is to consider nature and God as two aspects of one and the same existence. Nature, from his point of view, is the life of God. Consequently, every being in nature, the human soul like all the rest, is only a fragment of the Divine life. Living unity can only be found in God, or, to express myself better, I see this perpetual dilemma rising against Pantheism: Either each being has his own life, and then the Divine life

The theory of a soul without unity is not a mere accidental excrescence upon Spinozism.



can only be the collection of all particular lives; a purely abstract collection, a mere total, without true unity, reality, or individuality;—or there really is one Divine, individual life, of which all particular existences are only fragments, and then these existences can only have an apparent individuality, a nominal reality, a false and deceptive unity.

Immortality necessarily banished.

Spinoza has not been more fortunate in his attempts to make the immortality of the soul fit into his system. Not that I doubt his good faith, when (in the fifth book of the *Ethica*) I find him loudly professing the existence of a future life. He even seems to admit a system of rewards and punishments, a sort of graduated scale, very ingeniously and originally constructed, according to which, each human soul, at the moment of death, naturally receives a portion of immortality and happiness nicely proportioned to the precise degree in which it has raised itself amidst earthly vicissitudes. But honesty of mind is no infallible preservative from deception, and his very consistency sometimes helps to lead him astray. The more I study the system of Spinoza, the more sure I feel that the dogma of the immortality of the soul is necessarily banished from it. The human soul is for him the idea of a human body, in other words, an aggregation of ideas linked to an aggregation of corporeal molecules. To make the soul, thus understood, continue to exist after the decomposition of the body, there must be a miracle, a reversal of the necessary laws of universal life, which is in his eyes the most enormous of absurdities. But this is not all. Spinoza expressly asserts that after organic dissolution, neither imagination nor memory can exist. But without me-

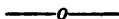
mory, the continuity of consciousness, and consequently consciousness itself, vanish.<sup>1</sup> What, from thenceforth, can life be for a person, for a being, who says *I*? To exist without knowing it is to live no more with human life; therefore, for man it is to have ceased to exist. So, the life which is left to us by Spinoza is in all things like unto death; and that sincere mind understands this so thoroughly, that he appears to have scrupled to avail himself of the word *immortality*. "There is," he says, "in the human soul something eternal." "We feel," he elsewhere exclaims, "that we are eternal." If I understand him rightly, this means that the human soul is only a transitory form of an eternal principle, and that we feel our successive existence flow away, like a rapid wave, upon the changeful ocean of universal life. In the last analysis, God only is eternal and ever living, while every individual existence, the human soul like the vilest and most wretched of animals, is irrevocably condemned to be swallowed up for ever, after having floated above the abyss for some fleeting moments.

These are my scruples. If they are well-founded, it will follow that Spinoza—setting out from the abstract and barren principle of substance, and developing this principle by a completely artificial method of purely geometrical deduction—ends at last by defacing the idea of God, and degrading that of the soul, that is to say, by the overthrow of all religion and of all morality. In spite of its strong and beautiful arrangement, the system of Spinoza appears to me to be a series of arbitrary premisses and impious conclusions.

<sup>1</sup> [We should here remember that "consciousness of what is past ascertains our personal identity to ourselves, but does not make it."—Butler. *Dissertation of Personal Identity*.]

## Fourth Treatise.

*God in the System of Newton.*



I HAVE thoroughly traversed the world of Cartesian ideas, and found in it, at first, beautiful irradiations, but afterwards doubtful glimmerings, which at last plunged me into deep darkness. Descartes and his school, I apprehend, have no more essential principles to teach me. I wish to interrogate the rival and contradictor of Descartes, Isaac Newton.

Contrast  
between  
Newton  
and Des-  
cartes.

Scarcely have I crossed the Strait when I feel that I am, indeed, in a new world of ideas. What would Father Malebranche say, if he left Paris for Cambridge, or if, upon starting from the Academy of the sciences, he was present at a sitting of the Royal Society of London. His illustrious master, subtle matter, and the *vortices*, are freely enough handled there. This intellectual revolution is the work of a young man, who, at twenty-three years of age, invented the infinitesimal calculus, analysed light, and discovered the law of universal attraction.

Newton's  
intellectual  
training.

Newton, however, was not formed quite without assistance. When he arrived at Trinity College, Cambridge, at the age of eighteen, having been scarcely initiated in science at Grantham School, his master, Barrow, seeing that he disdained Euclid, put Descartes' *Geometry* into his

hands. He knew how to read, and to profit by it. It was this which launched him into unknown regions, and discovered a calculus unknown to Descartes, Wallis, Huyghens, and Pascal. Questions considered insoluble were answered with astonishing simplicity. Armed with his new geometry, Newton engaged in the explanation of the great phenomena of the universe, and soon contradicted, on all points, the man whom no one else in Europe any longer ventured to contradict. Every portion of the system of Descartes, general physics, astronomy, and optics, seemed to him insecure; the whole edifice had to be rebuilt.

In the midst of this revolution of ideas, my principal object of interest is to know what Newton thought upon Divine things. I find in him a pious, sincere, believing Christian,<sup>1</sup> and, at the same time, a profoundly spiritual philosopher. His faith in Divine Providence suddenly bursts out in the midst of his most abstract calculations. It is felt in his very presence, and, it is said, even in his way of pronouncing the name of God.<sup>2</sup>

Newton a religious philosopher, where Theism was based upon final causes.

<sup>1</sup> [It is painful to be obliged to qualify this, on the whole, most deserved panegyric. Waterland, in his correspondence, alludes more than once, with rather unpleasant asperity, to Newton's Arianizing tendencies. He accuses Sir Isaac of "silly abusing the Athanasians in his 14th chapter on the Prophecies of Daniel," and of "countenancing Arianism in the piece referred to." But there is a malicious delight expressed in another letter, at the Master of Jesus finding "the old knight tripping in calculation, and failing in his own art." This curious allusion is to a passage in the eleventh chapter of Newton's work, relative to the time of celebrating the festival of Corpus Christi. Dr. Ashton detected the mistake, and Dr. Grey, Waterland's correspondent, in a tract published by him, states, that he owed this observation to a learned divine, whose name he was not at liberty to mention.—Waterland's Works, VI. ; Letters to the Rev. Dr. Grey, pp. 446-451 ; Grey's *Examination of the 14th Chapter of Sir Isaac Newton's Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, 1736, p. 17.]

<sup>2</sup> [Voltaire says that when he met Dr. Clarke in 1726 he observed that that philosopher never pronounced the name of God without an

But one thing strikes me, which is, that Newton only speaks of God, as he discovers His traces in the suitableness and harmony of the laws of the universe. His favourite demonstration is that of final causes, so contemptuously and unequivocally repudiated by Descartes.

Is his  
Theism  
that of  
Descartes?

Had not, then, Descartes and Newton the same God? With different ideas upon matter, motion, space, time, and creatures in general, had they formed different ideas upon the Creator? I wish to clear up this question. But have I the capacity; and how am I to set about the task? Newton has not written upon the problems of natural religion. He was not proud of his metaphysics: it merely happened to him that, in composing his works upon physics and mathematics, he opened out in them more general views, as they crossed his intellect, and hid his inductions and conjectures upon the origin of things in the corner of a *scholium*, or let them appear in the middle of the most rigorous demonstrations.

I open his two principal writings, his *Principia* and *Optics*. How shall I pierce into this profound geometry? Where masters in science only guide themselves with difficulty, what can a middling scholar, like myself, do? Yet, I must make the attempt, at the risk of having to ask for help from adepts. For if, on the one hand, men of science neglected the views of Newton on the Divinity, alleging their metaphysical incompetence; and if,

air of profound respect. "When I owned the impression which this made on me, he told me that he had insensibly imbibed the habit from Newton."—*Elements de Philosophie de Newton*, p. I. Robert Boyles' biographer tells us, that the name of God was never mentioned by that great man "without a pause and a visible stop."

on the other hand, minds intent upon religious philosophy, recoiled before a whole book, bristling with algebraical formulæ; the world would surely lose something in losing the thoughts of a Newton.

I shall not, then, attempt to understand the calculus of fluxions, which, for me, would be simply impossible, but merely to grasp, as I pass, the views of Newton upon God, and to link them to the general idea which he has formed of the universe.

Newton's  
view of  
God.

Newton does not launch himself towards God like Descartes, with a sudden elevation of thought. He distrusts pure reason. And it is only after having exhausted the observation of the visible world, that he allows himself to be led by induction and reasoning to the invisible mover. With Descartes, God is the *first Principle* of natural philosophy; with Newton, He is the *last conclusion*. We must dwell upon this difference, for many others may arise from it.

Difference  
of Car-  
tesian and  
Newtonian  
methods.

In physics, the method of Descartes is not the experimental method, which rises gradually from the observation of phenomena to the discovery of their laws. "I intend," he says roundly, "to explain effects by their causes, and not causes by their effects." But how are we to grasp causes? Is it by framing hypotheses? Descartes does not

In physics  
Descartes  
"builds a  
world  
upon hy-  
pothesis,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ["Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God, or any thing else; is building a world upon hypothesis, like Descartes."—Butler's *Analogy*, Introduction. In this section, the student has a commentary upon words which, I suspect, are vague and hazy enough to many readers. The reference is to the Cartesian construction of an ideal world from an assumed definition of matter.]

admit it. He persuades himself that his reasonings are founded upon the nature of things. It is all very well to say so: but in laying down for the origin of the world a matter, whose essence is entirely comprised in extension, in length, breadth, and depth—an indefinite, homogeneous, inert matter, in which a fixed and immutable quantity of motion has been spread abroad—what does Descartes do but pile hypothesis upon hypothesis? He proceeds as a geometer, not as a physical philosopher. He constructs and fashions an ideal, in oblivion of the real, world. I take himself to witness:

His theory  
of matter.

“I frankly confess,” he says, “that I know no other matter of corporeal things than that which can be divided, figured, and moved in all kinds of ways; that is to say, what geometers call quantity, and take for the object of their demonstrations. Further, that I only consider in this matter its divisions, figures, and movements. Finally, that touching this, I am prepared to receive nothing as true, but that which shall be deduced from it with so much evidence, that it may take the place of a geometrical demonstration. And so long as, by this means, we can account for all the phenomena of nature—as may be seen by what follows—I do not think that we should receive other principles in physics, nor even that we should wish for others than those which are here explained.”<sup>1</sup>

Newton's  
method.

If there ever was a man, in whom a sort of mental divination, united with a sagacity of observation which vainly attempts to conceal itself,

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Philosophy*, Part II., p. 64.

could temper the capital fault of an arbitrary and precarious method, that man was certainly Descartes. And yet, what result has been produced in his hands by the geometrical method applied to the science of nature? The system of *vortices*, that is to say, the epic of the universe, in place of its history. For this fantastic edifice Newton wishes to substitute the solid layers of an imperishable monument. For this purpose, he begins by reforming method. In place of going from causes to effects, he insists upon going from effects to causes. In place of giving observation a subordinate place, he would have us assign to it the principal position.

"All which is not derived from phenomena," he says, "should be reputed as hypothesis, and hypotheses, of what nature soever they be, have no value in natural philosophy."

Newton's mind, however, is too lofty to be confined to a bare empiricism. He does not exclude the investigation of causes, but he subordinates it to this knowledge of effects. He *founds* science upon analysis, only *adjourning* synthesis, and reserving himself to apply it, in its turn, with a grandeur which detracts nothing from its exactness.

Yet Newton's method is not merely empirical. It *founds* science upon analysis, but only *adjourns* synthesis.

"In physics," he says, "as well as in mathematics, the *analytic* should always precede the *synthetic* method, in the investigation of difficult matters. The first consists in making experiments, in observing phenomena, in rising by induction to general conclusions, and in not admitting any objection against these conclusions, unless it be taken from some experiment, or from

Newton's definition of the analytic and synthetic methods.



other certain truths ;<sup>1</sup> for, as for hypotheses, we must pay no regard to them in experimental philosophy. Though induction, founded upon experiments and observations, does not demonstratively establish general conclusions, it is yet the best way of reasoning which the nature of things will admit; and it should be considered so much the better founded, as the induction has more generality. If no objection rises on the side of the *phenomena*, we may draw an universal conclusion. But if ultimately experiment presents any objection, the conclusion must then be limited by certain proper reservations. By means of this kind of analysis, we may pass on from compounded to simple things, and from motions to the forces which produce them, and, in general, from effects to their causes, and from particular to more general causes, until we arrive at universal causes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ["In philosophiâ experimentalī, propositiones ex phænomenis per inductionem collectæ, non obstantibus contrariis hypothesibus pro veris aut accuratè, aut quàm proximè haberi debent, donec alia occurrerint phænomena per quæ aut accuratiores reddantur aut exceptionibus obnoxizæ."]

"In experimental philosophy, propositions collected from phenomena by induction should be held to be exactly, or as nearly as possible approximately true, until other phenomena occur, by which they may either be rendered more accurate, or liable to exceptions."—*Principia*, Lib. iii. init.]

<sup>2</sup> [It is interesting to compare Butler's account of the analytic and synthetic methods in their bearing upon moral science, and upon natural theology, with Newton's view of their bearing on physical science. Butler's partiality to Clarke's Theory of the "Essential Difference of Actions," makes him lean a little to the analytic method in moral science, though his unflinching good sense saves him from any extreme statement. "There are two ways in which the subject may be treated. One begins from enquiring into the abstract relations of things; the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is. The first seems the most direct formal proof; the latter is in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind."—*Preface to Sermons*, cf. *Arist. Ethic.* I. 4, 5, on the *οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχῶν λόγοι* καὶ *οἱ ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς*; also, *King's Origin*

Such is the method called *analysis*. As for *synthesis*, it consists in taking certain known and proved causes as our principle, to explain by their means the phenomena which arise from them, and in proving these explanations."<sup>1</sup>

How could Newton have failed to lead all minds with him in the line indicated in these pages, which have remained the inviolable law of the physical sciences? He introduced into natural science the very method which Descartes had so gloriously inaugurated in the science of man and that of God. And Newton came in to finish this necessary separation between physics and metaphysics, verbally announced but rarely observed in fact by the French philosopher. It may be said that Newton dethroned the physical philosophy of Descartes by showing himself more Cartesian than Descartes.

This revolution in method changed the entire aspect of science. Newton established material things, such as they are shown to us by experience, with all their sensible properties and real diversities, instead of that inert and homogeneous matter, of which all the modifications may be resolved into extension, a completely geometrical and abstract conception. Hence follows a general idea of the universe radically different from that of the Cartesians.

The Newtonian method introduces a view of the universe different from the Cartesian.

*of Evil*, and *Law's Preface*, p. 9. In natural theology, Butler speaks with approbation of "joining abstract reasonings with the observation of facts," which is precisely the Newtonian principle.

The student of Bacon will constantly be reminded of him in this section. The leading thought in Newton's mind was that "man's intellect needed to be weighted with lead rather than plumed with feathers," and that the true method is to "rise from particular facts to general principles through maxims of intermediate generality."]

<sup>1</sup> *Newtoni Optics*, lib. iii. quæst. 31.

Cartesian  
and New-  
tonian  
theories of  
space and  
matter.

Descartes trusted, with a kind of blind hardihood, in the deceptive rigour of his deductions. Hence, from the concept of *matter*, considered as synonymous with *res extensa*, he concluded—

(1.) That it is *divisible ad infinitum*, all extension admitting of being conceived as formed of two halves, and so on.

(2.) That it is *illimitable*, all extension, however great, forcing the reason to conceive a greater extension.

(3.) That it is absolutely *full*, since matter necessarily exists wherever there is extension.

Newton, observing instead of constructing nature, arrives, by means of observation and induction, at precisely contrary results.

(1.) If, according to him, every body is *ideally divisible ad infinitum*, *quâ* it is extension, it does not in the least follow that it is *practically* divisible. All on the contrary would lead us to believe that bodies are composed of particles, absolutely full in themselves, which constitute the impenetrability of matter.<sup>1</sup>

(2.) Nothing obliges us to consider the corporeal world as absolutely *infinite* in extension. What is really infinite is the space in which bodies move, or again, the time which measures their movements; but there are strong reasons for believing that this corporeal world, in its imperfect and perishable substance, is limited in every way. If it is not infinite in duration, why should it be infinite in extension? If it has begun, why should it not end?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Optics*, iii. quæst. 31; cf. *Principia*, iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Optics*, iii. quæst. 31.

(3.) In the densest body there is much more of void space than of matter. The material world, without the pores and intervals which swell out its bulk, would appear very small, and if pressed by a powerful hand would shrink into the most inconsiderable volume. Let us not, then, seek subjects for pride in the contemplation of nature, but rather lessons of modesty and of humility.

Here, then, is the universe such as it is exhibited to us by observation and experience, faithfully interpreted by reason. There are an immense number of impenetrable molecules, simple and indivisible, if not ideally, at least in fact, associated in great masses different in form and extension, and forming stars which are displayed in the bosom of an infinite space. Science has to measure these stars, to learn their direction, their speed, and the order of their motions; to reduce all to the simplest and most general laws; finally, to ascend, if possible, to the First Cause, upon which all motion, law, and existence, are dependent.

Newton takes up the problem at the point where it had been left by the fathers of modern astronomy—by two especially, Copernicus and Kepler. The first had taught men the true place which is occupied in the universe by the earth which they inhabit, and traced with a firm hand the great lines of the architecture of the heavens. The motion of the earth and of the other planets round the sun was now and henceforward a matter of demonstration; and Kepler investigated and discovered the curve described by these, and the law

Newton  
follows  
Copernicus  
and Kepler.

of their motion. Then a man came who demonstrated that underlying the law of Kepler there is another more general law, which rules our solar world, and may extend to all the other stars in the universe.

The system  
of the  
world  
founded  
upon uni-  
versal at-  
traction.

An established tradition<sup>1</sup> represents Newton to us as suddenly illuminated by the first idea of his discovery. He was seated under an apple tree. An apple became detached from the tree, and fell at his feet. He set about reflecting upon the nature of that singular force which seems to push bodies towards the centre of the earth, precipitates them towards it with continually accelerated rapidity, and is exercised without any appreciable diminution, upon high towers, and on the top of the loftiest mountains. Immediately a new idea flashed across his mind. "Why," he asked himself, "should not this force extend to the moon itself? And, if so, what is the other force which keeps it in its orbit round the earth?"

Newton's mind became full of this conjecture. He gave himself up to it entirely, indifferent to every other thought, advancing every day towards his end, without communicating his progress to any one, not even to his master, Barrow, jealous of owing the secret of the universe to any one but himself, and wishing to discover it by *always thinking of it*. If his astronomical observations appeared to him to be uncertain, he went over them again. If the known instruments of calculation were insufficient, he invented new ones, especially the infinitesimal calculus. It was only when

<sup>1</sup> M. Biot's former and more recent papers on Newton in the *Bibliographie Universelle*, and *Journal des Savants*, 1832-1854.

he had mastered all these combined resources, that he applied all his power of reflection to the problem which he had proposed. "I keep," said he, "the subject of my investigation constantly before me, and wait for the first glimmerings to begin, dawning slowly and little by little, until they change into full and entire clearness."

This clearness at last appeared, and when the *Principia* was published in 1687, the system of the world, founded upon universal attraction, was mathematically demonstrated.

What is attraction? According to Newton, it is the general law of the physical universe, nothing more or less. But a law is not a *cause*. It is but the exact expression, and general formula of a fact.<sup>1</sup> Newtonian definition of law.

If Newton rejects the Cartesian mechanism, the system of *vortices*, it is not that he pretends to introduce the idea of force, and the theory of dynamism into the metaphysics of nature. Newton's mind was cautious and pushed its mistrust of speculation to the verge of timidity. Hence, even after having discovered and demonstrated the law of universal attraction, he scrupulously refrains from every theory upon the essence of bodies. In his eyes, attraction is a universal fact, a law of nature, suggested by analogy, established by precise observations, and demonstrated by calculation. He will advance no further. Does attraction Attraction simply a universal fact.

<sup>1</sup> ["*Law* in the Aristotelian system implies a consciousness of obligation, which exists whether realised or not in practice. *Law* in the Baconian system means an uniform sequence, which exists only as it is realised in practice."—*Mr. Mansel's Introduction to Aldrich*. And elsewhere, "the *laws of nature* are simply general statements concerning the powers and properties of certain classes of objects which have come under our observation."—*Aids to Faith*, p. 16.]

imply a force inherent in matter, and constituting its essence, or can it be explained mechanically by aid of an invisible fluid? Newton, reserving himself for a future attempt upon the latter explanation, absolutely refuses to pronounce upon the physical cause of universal motion. "I do not examine," he said, "what may be the cause of these attractions. What I call *attraction* may be produced by impulsion, or by other means unknown to me. I only use the word *attraction* to signify generally a force of some kind by which bodies tend reciprocally towards one another, whatever the cause may be. For it is from the phenomena of nature that we should learn what bodies are reciprocally attractive, and what are the laws and properties of this attraction, before looking for the cause which produces them."<sup>1</sup> To those who press him too closely with questions, his answer is that of Socrates; "all that I know is that I know nothing." When he is reproached with reviving the "occult qualities" of scholasticism, he protests that in his eyes attraction is not strictly speaking a quality, but a phenomenon of whose cause, either in itself, or in its mode of action, he professes complete ignorance. Far from introducing dynamism, Newton visibly leans to the contrary system. He shows himself everywhere a mechanist; only instead of being so in the sense of Descartes, he is so like Bacon and Gassendi, and like the old atomistic school, always excepting all that relates to the soul and to God.

But is it the ultimate term of natural philosophy to have discovered the general law of the world,

<sup>1</sup> *Optics*, III., quæst. 31.

whilst absolutely ignorant of the first principle of its motions? Many scientific men of the present day think so. But such is not Newton's opinion. According to him, it belongs to natural philosophy to signalize the necessity of a first cause, superior to purely mechanical causes. The man of science, and the geometer as such, may stop at the law of attraction; but as philosophers they rise higher. This is not all. Newton not only professed to prove the existence of God. He ventured to fathom His nature and his relation with the universe, and this is the most original side of his Theistic views.

When his wonderful discoveries began to be known, he was asked upon all sides if they could not serve to render the existence of God more sensible, and to confound the sceptics and the atheists. "Do not doubt it," answered Newton. "In the first place, it is absurd to suppose that necessity presides over the universe. For a blind necessity being everywhere the same at all times and in every place, the variety of things could not result from it. And, consequently, the universe, with the order of its parts appropriated to the variety of times and places, can only have its origin from one primitive Being, who has ideas and will."<sup>1</sup>

"Besides, at every step astronomy finds the limit of physical causes, and, consequently, the trace of the action of God."<sup>2</sup> If we suppose an infinity of material elements, distributed in all the

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, Schl. Gen. compare *Optics*, III. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Four Letters to Doctor Bentley, containing some arguments in proof of a Deity.*



parts of an unbounded space, I grant that, by means of a rigorously mathematical (and therefore most improbable) distribution, the material attractions of all these molecules will lead them to draw near from their diverse centres, and will end by condensing them into masses of unequal bulk, such as stars, planets, and satellites. But it is certain that the actual motions of planets cannot arise solely from the action of gravitation, for, as this force pushes the planets towards the sun, in order that they should take a movement of revolution round this, it needs a divine arm to launch them upon the tangent of their orbits."

"Moreover, since comets descend into our planetary region, and move there in a thousand ways, sometimes in the same direction as planets, sometimes in the opposite direction, and sometimes also in directions which intersect those of the planets, according to inclined or elliptical planes, and at all sorts of angles, it is certain that no natural cause could have determined all the planets and their satellites to move in the same direction, and on the same plane, without any considerable variation. There are traces of counsel here.

"And in the same way no natural cause could have given the planets and their satellites those exact degrees of rapidity in precise relation with their distances referred to the sun and to other centres of motion, which degrees were necessary, in order that these bodies should come to move themselves in concentric orbits. For if the planets had had as rapid a motion as that of comets (as might have happened in case their motion had no other cause than gravity) they

would not have moved in concentric but eccentric orbits, as comets do. Just so, if all the planets had had a motion as rapid as that of Mercury, or as slow as that of Saturn and his satellites, or if their different paces were much slower or much quicker than they are, and if their distances from the centres round which they turn were much greater or less, with the same swiftness; or if the quantity of matter in the sun, or in Saturn, Jupiter, and the Earth were more or less than it is, the planets could not have turned round the sun, nor the satellites round Saturn, Jupiter, and the Earth in concentric orbits, but planets and satellites would have moved in hyperboles and paraboles, or elongated ellipses. Therefore, to form this system, with all its motions, it needs a cause which knew and compared the quantities of matter in the different heavenly bodies, and the attractive powers which should result from them, and the diverse distances of the planets from the sun, of the satellites from Saturn, Jupiter, and the Earth, and the rates at which the planets and satellites should turn round the bodies which serve them for centres. *And to compare and adjust all these things together in so great a variety of bodies, argues that cause to be not blind and fortuitous, but very well skilled in geometry and mechanics.*"<sup>1</sup>

"This is not all, and God is further necessary either to make the masses turn upon themselves, which cannot arise from attraction, or to make the rotation agree with their circulation, as is observed in the sun, planets, and satellites, while the revolutions of comets operate indifferently every

<sup>1</sup> *First Letter to Doctor Bentley*, p. 431, 433.

way. Besides in the formation of cosmic masses,<sup>1</sup> how could the disseminated molecules separate into two classes, one luminous, aggregating themselves to form luminous bodies by themselves, like the sun and stars; the others opaque, assembling themselves to constitute planets and satellites? All this is inconceivable without the action of an infinite intelligence."

Such are the principal arguments with which Newton supplied Dr Bentley against the Pyrrhonists. Moreover, he had already explained himself in this respect with admirable power, in the scholium which closes the *Principia*, and in the following passage of the Optics.

"Natural philosophy consists in reasoning on phenomena without resting on hypotheses, and in deducing causes from effects till the first of all causes is reached, which certainly is not mechanical. The end which this science ought to propose to itself is not only to develop the mechanism of the universe, but to resolve more general questions, such as these: What is there in those parts of space which are entirely void of matter? and why do the planets gravitate towards the sun, as that planet gravitates toward them, without the existence of any tangible matter between these bodies? Whence comes it that nature never does anything without a purpose, and whence arises all the marvellous order and the admirable beauty that we observe in the universe? Of what use are the comets, and what causes the planets to move all according to the same rule in concentric orbits,

<sup>1</sup> First Letter to Dr. Bentley, p. 430, See M. Biot., *Journal des Savants*, 1832.

while the comets traverse the most eccentric orbits, and move indifferently without any rule? What retains the fixed stars, and hinders them from falling one upon the other? How did it happen that the bodies of living animals were formed with so much art, and to what end were their different parts created? Was the eye constructed without any optical science, and the ear without any knowledge of sound?

“How are the movements of living bodies determined by the will? Whence arises instinct in animals? Is not the *sensorium* of animals the place to which the thinking substance is present, and into which the sensible images of things are carried by the nerves and brain, that as present there they may be perceived by [that thinking substance itself] present? And, does it not appear from these *phenomena* that there is an incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent Being, who in infinite space, as though it were His sensorium, intimately sees and thoroughly perceives things themselves, and being present embraces them all present within Himself, of which things that in us which feels and thinks perceives and observes in its petty sensorium (*in sensoriolo suo*) the images only borne into it by the organs of its senses? If the steps which we are permitted to make in this new kind of philosophy cannot raise us to the immediate knowledge of the First Cause, yet they bring us ever nearer to it, and that is enough to make them appear of great value to us.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, then, was Newton led on by his method to a First Cause of motion and of universal order.

<sup>1</sup> *Optics*, iii., quest. 28.

Peculiarities in Newton's Theistic system.

Up to this point there is nothing which is not very simple and familiar in the idea which he forms of God. What is of peculiar interest in the homage rendered by Newton to the power and wisdom of the Creator is just this, that he lets us see the loftiest science finding the faith of common sense at the end of all its marvellous calculations. But Newton did not stop there. He had his own views upon the Deity. In spite of all his caution, he even entangled himself in a peculiar theory, at once very original and extremely rash. Upon reading over again attentively the passage which I have just quoted, I perceive certain singular expressions. Newton expressly says that infinite space is a sort of *sensorium* to God by which He perceives the objects of nature. This is not a mere metaphor: it is the index to a particular theory, whose key we must endeavour to find in the views of Newton upon *space*.<sup>1</sup>

The solidity of matter, which is true.

Descartes had confounded two things which are perfectly distinct—*extension*, which is given to us by our senses as a property of bodies, and *bodies* themselves. The Cartesian school generally hold that every body is nothing else than a portion of extension. Newton overthrew this theory. While preserving the extension of bodies,

<sup>1</sup> [Here is this famous passage in the original: "An non sensorium animalium est locus cui substantia sentiens adest, et in quem sensibiles rerum species per nervos et cerebrum deferuntur, ut ibi præsentes a præsente sentiri possint? Atque an non ex phenomenis constet, esse entem incorporeum, viventem, intelligentem, omnipræsensem, qui in spatio infinito, tanquam sensorio suo, res ipsas intimè cernat penitusque percipiat, totasque intra se præsens præsentes complectatur; quarum quidem rerum id quod in nobis sentit et cogitat imagines tantum ad se per organa sensuum delatas in sensorio suo percipit et contuetur."—*Optics*, lib. iii. quæst. 28.]

he also gave them those properties of which the Cartesian physics had deprived them, and above all *solidity*, which makes them sensible to our organs; distinguishes and constitutes them; so far all is well.

But Newton, separating himself more and more from Descartes to approach more nearly to the Gasendists, maintains, like them, that the *vacuum* denied by the Cartesians exists as well as the *plenum*. Still further, he holds that in the universe there is much more of the *vacuum* than of the *plenum*, and even that there is no proportion between one and the other, the *plenum* being finite in comparison of the *vacuum*, which is infinite. Thus, then, this universe, which seems to overwhelm us with its greatness, is reduced to a small assemblage of corpuscles, flung out, one knows not why, and as it were lost in a corner of immensity.

The existence of a *vacuum*, and the smallness of aboriginal corpuscles, which are false.

This conception involves difficulties of more kinds than one. But there is one which must have specially occupied the mind of Newton. What is the nature and origin of the infinite space, in which the world occupies so small a place? Is it independent of the bodies which it contains in its vast bosom? Can it be conceived as limited, mobile, ceasing to exist? This seems impossible.

Newton's infinite space.

But if space really exists, if it is independent, infinite, immutable, necessary, what is wanting to its being God, or at least to its being one of the primary principles of things? This difficulty contained nothing to alarm the disciples of Democritus, who openly professed to do without God, and to explain all with their *vacuum* and

Objection: is not this infinite space God?

*plenum*. But a man like Newton, whose religion was deep and sincere, who was a decided supporter of final causes, and an earnest worshipper of the one supreme God, could not but have been disturbed by this conclusion. There can be no doubt that he considered the problem. Has he precisely solved it? It does not appear. But he inclined towards an original solution, which his disciple, Clarke, undertook to shape into a system, and to defend skilfully and courageously against the formidable dialectics of Leibnitz.

Answer :  
Space is  
not God,  
but in some  
sense as if  
His *sensorium*.

Here is the substance of this theory. Infinite, independent of bodies, immutable as it is, space is not a being by itself. It is a necessary attribute of God. So with duration. We must distinguish between relative and absolute duration. All beings in this world have a certain duration. They live a day, a year, a century. But as all bodies, great or small, are situated in a space which encloses and stretches beyond them, so all particular durations are like the fugitive waves of an eternal river, which has no fountain-head and no mouth, which precedes, devours, and survives all. Take away the beings of this world. Infinite space and infinite duration subsist—that is, God subsists; for infinite space is one of His modes of existence—immensity; just as infinite duration is another of His modes of existence—eternity. But, if it be so, the presence of God in the universe appears in a new light. Space, which enfolds and penetrates all bodies, being something of God, being God Himself, it follows that God is present to the universe, not only by His creative and preserving power, but with an

effectual and substantial presence.<sup>1</sup> Thus we can explain statements which otherwise appear inconceivable; that God knows all things; that He is present to the commonest and lowest beings; that "the hairs of our head (as Scripture says) are all numbered;" and that "God searcheth the hearts and the reins." In fact, God perceives bodies, as the human soul present in the brain perceives the impressions of bodies, a process which is the feeble but faithful image of the Divine perception. For space is in some sort the *sensorium* of God, as the brain is that of the soul; only that the brain is a petty *sensorium*, *sensoriolum*, while space is so upon a grand scale.

Such is the real meaning of the celebrated passage which I have cited, and it is by the light of the same theory that we must interpret a not less celebrated portion of the *Principia*. "*Æternus est et infinitus, omnipotens et omnisciens, id est durat ab æterno in æternum, et adest ab infinito in infinitum; omnia regit et omnia cognoscit quæ fiunt aut fieri possunt. Non est æternitas et infinitas, sed æternus et infinitus; non est duratio et spatium, sed durat et adest. Durat semper et adest ubique, et existendo semper et ubique, durationem et spatium constituit. Cum unaquæque spatii particula sit semper, et unumquodque durationis indivisibile momentum ubique, certè rerum omnia fabricator ac Dominus non erit nunquam nunquam.*"<sup>2</sup>

These words have been very frequently quoted.

<sup>1</sup> [In this sense Newton says, "Omnipresens est non per virtutem solam, sed etiam per substantiam."—*Principia*—*Scholium Generale*.]

<sup>2</sup> *Principia*—*Scholium Generale*.



The theory latent in this scholium is a questionable one, however guarded and explained by Newton.

But to understand them thoroughly, we must not detach them from the general views of Newton, nor from the commentary given to them by Clarke, under the eye and with the sanction of his master. If we read this passage somewhat superficially, we may believe that Newton simply meant to say that extension and duration, space and time, have the reason of their existence and their foundation in God. And this doctrine, thus generally stated, is incontestable. But, if the words are closely pressed, we shall find in them the germ of a very singular and questionable theory upon space and upon God. Newton holds that God is properly the substance, to which infinite duration and extension stand in the relation of modes of being. God endures (*durat semper*); God is formally present everywhere (*non per virtutem solam, sed etiam per substantiam*): eternity is confounded with duration, and space with immensity.

I admit that Newton attempts to qualify this doctrine, as if he understood its perils. He declares that there are no parts in the substance of God—a substance which, like all others, is absolutely unknown to us.<sup>1</sup> The movement of things introduces no diversity, no alteration, no passion, into the Divine essence. If we may say that God sees, hears, embraces all, it is because God is all eye, ear, arm, brain, intelligence, though not after the fashion of man; He is all this incorporeally, or rather in a mode incomprehensible by

<sup>1</sup> ["Ideas habemus attributorum ejus, sed quid sit rei alicujus substantia minimè cognoscimus."—*Principia*—*Scholium Generale*.]

our weakness.<sup>1</sup> Finally, God, though present everywhere, as the soul is present to the brain, must not be considered as the soul of the universe. The soul has need of organs to perceive the images of things. But "God has no need of such organs," says Newton, "because He is everywhere present to things themselves."<sup>2</sup>

It would certainly be unjust not to remember, and to allow for, these qualifications. But the theory exists, at bottom, in spite of restrictions which are more than once simply inconsistencies. Still further to appreciate the strength and weakness of the theory, I lay aside these scattered passages of Newton, which, after all, are but *aperçus*, for the purpose of finding a precise and regular system in his commentator, pupil, and friend, Samuel Clarke.

I take up the justly prized work, entitled, "A Clarke's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of Commen- God. More particularly in answer to Mr. tary upon Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers."<sup>3</sup> these views of Newton.

Without absolutely rejecting the Cartesian proofs, Clarke guards against making direct use of them, upon the ground that they do not convince many minds; and flattering himself that he will succeed better, he employs other arguments, which he thus sums up:—

"It is a much clearer, and more convincing way of arguing, to demonstrate that there does actually exist without us a Being, whose existence is necessary, and of itself; (1.) by showing the evident contradiction contained in the contrary

<sup>1</sup> *Principia*, I. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Optics*, lib. iii. quæst. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Clarke's Boyle Lectures for 1704.*

supposition (as I have before done); and (2.), at the same time, the absolute impossibility of destroying or removing some ideas, as of eternity and immensity, which, therefore, must needs be modes or attributes of a necessary Being actually existing.”<sup>1</sup>

We may pass by the first demonstration, which is of a negative character, and which is confined to proving the impossibility of a progress *ad infinitum*, of second causes and contingent beings,<sup>2</sup> and fix our attention upon the positive idea which Clarke has just indicated. He developes it with all the clearness that can be desired in the following passage:—

“To the second head of argument, I answer, Space is a property (or mode) of the self-existent substance, but not of any other substances. All other substances are in space, and are penetrated by it; but the self-existent substance is not in space, or penetrated by it, but is itself (if I may so speak) the substratum of space, the ground of the existence of space and duration itself. Which (space and duration) being evidently necessary, and yet themselves not substances, but properties or modes, show evidently that the substance, without which these properties could not subsist, is itself much more (if that were possible) necessary. And as space and duration are needful (i.e., *sine qua non*) to the existence of every thing else; so, consequently, is the substance to which

<sup>1</sup> P. 21, Eighth edition. 1733.

<sup>2</sup> Prop. ii. [That there has existed from eternity some one immutable and independent Being. Of the absolute impossibility of an eternal succession of dependent beings, existing without any original independent cause at all, pp. 11-13.]

these properties belong, in that peculiar manner which I before mentioned."

Several serious consequences follow from this doctrine—

*First*, Clarke, like his master Newton, makes no difference between the notions of space and duration, on one side, and those of immensity and eternity on the other. If there were any doubt on the point, here are two decisive passages: "How universally," exclaims Clarke, "have men for many ages believed, that eternity is no duration at all, and infinity no amplitude!"<sup>1</sup> And again, "infinite space is an infinite extension, and eternity is an infinite duration."

Consequences of Clarke's doctrine.  
1 Space and duration = immensity and eternity.

A *second* consequence is, that Clarke considers infinite space and duration as real things, independent of extended and changing objects, and, which is more, as necessary and indestructible.

2 Infinite space and duration have an objective reality, and are necessary.

*Finally*, it is a proved fact that Clarke attributes to the Being of beings infinite extension and duration, which are necessary modes of His existence.

3 Infinite space and duration modes of God's existence.

When all this is distinctly understood, I confess that I cannot altogether bow my mind to this Newtonian Theodicea. I cannot assent to this theory of a God, who is extended in space, and who flows on in time, thus penetrating souls and

General objection to this, in its bearing on the Creator and his creation.

<sup>1</sup> [Correspondence between Butler and Clarke. Answer to the third letter. Butler's reply closes with a memorable sentence, which shows both his calm devotion to truth at the early age of twenty-one, and, what will be more doubted, his power of writing elegantly, had he not deliberately sacrificed grace to accuracy. "As I design the search after truth, as the business of my life, I shall not be ashamed to learn from any person; though, at the same time, I cannot but be sensible, that instruction from some men is like the gift of a prince; it reflects an honour on the person on whom it lays an obligation."]

<sup>1</sup> Answer to the Fifth Letter.

bodies, and who at a given moment comes forth from His repose to create a universe. That universe is, no doubt, admirable in the unity of its laws, and in the wisdom of its harmonious ends ; but, great as it appears to the senses, from the moment that limits are assigned to it, it is to reason no more than an atom lost in the infinite void, a mechanism so frail, that from age to age it needs a repairing hand to adjust and strengthen its springs.<sup>1</sup> All these thoughts, even when they are encircled by the splendour of Newton's discoveries, perplex my mind, and arrest its progress.

Investigation of the notions of time and space.

Before making definite affirmations upon these thorny problems, it will be well for me to collect

<sup>1</sup> "Dum cometæ moventur in orbibus valdè excentricis, undique et quoquoque in omnes cœli partes, utique nullo modo fieri poterit, ut cœco fato tribuendum sit, quod planetæ in orbibus concentricis motu consimili ferantur eodem omnes ; exceptis nimirum irregularitatibus quibusdam vix notatu dignis, quæ ex mutuis cometarum et planetarum in se invicem actionibus oriri potuerint, quæque verisimile est fore ut longinquitate temporis majores usque evadant, donec hæc naturæ compages manum emendaticem sit desideratura."—*Newton, Optics, Quæst. ulte.*

[I must express my dissent from the objection here advanced by M. Saisset. Apply that objection to God's moral government, and we have the argument against Redemption, which is as old as Celsus, that God has not so executed His work as to need repair, *ὅτι τῷ θεῷ καυρώσας τοῦ διορθώσεως*, Lib. iv., c. 69. In truth, arguments may for ever be bandied about plausibly for and against the "mechanical hypothesis," in its bearing alike upon the physical universe, and the moral world. Clarke may assert, that "if a king had a kingdom wherein all things would continually go on without his interposition, he would not deserve at all the title of king." Leibnitz may answer, that if things went on so, he would be a king in the highest sense. Butler, with his unfailing good sense, will tell us, that whether the Author of nature acts every moment, or has at once contrived and executed his own part in the plan of the world, makes no alteration in practical matters. The only question is, how, as a matter of fact, does science tell us that God *does* act in the physical universe ; and how does the Bible tell us, as a matter of fact, that God *does* act in that realm of His moral government which is disclosed to us by revelation. For the controversy on the "mechanical hypothesis," see *Notes to Bishop of Killaloe's Edition of Butler's Analogy*, p. 45 ; and *Larw's Note to King's Origin of Evil*, pp. 433-437.]

my thoughts, and to clear up a little those notions of space and time, which mingle with all my thoughts, and with all the actions of my life. There is much confusion and complication in these. Like every one else, I use almost at random the words, *extension, place, space, succession, duration, time*, and the like. Cannot one take one's bearings among notions so near, yet so different? I think I can disentangle three series of distinct notions—

(1.) The notions of concrete and finite extension and duration.

(2.) The notions of indefinite space and unlimited time.

(3.) The notions of immensity and of eternity. I must attempt to distinguish in strong lines these notions which are almost always confounded.

1. When I question my senses, all, in their different degrees, especially sight and touch, make me grasp objects as extended and figured. But this is not an abstract and undetermined extension. The body, which is felt by my hands, and looked upon with my eyes, possesses such and such extension, angles, and so on. All this is sensible, concrete, and particular. Now, if I consult my inner sense; if I begin to reflect upon myself, and to consider the course of my mental life, I perceive distinctly duration, not vague, indeterminate, and abstract, but concrete, precise, and determinate. For what is the permanent principle, which I apprehend under the variety of my fugitive sensations and thoughts? It is my intellectual energy, which is always present, even when it relaxes itself, and appears to sleep.<sup>1</sup> It

1. The notions of finite and concrete extension and duration.

<sup>1</sup> [Thus Coleridge would account for many strange fulfilments of

is my internal activity, always exercised, or ready to exercise itself at my will. It is, in a word, that principle of my personal identity which I call *I*. But to feel and know that I am identical in the bottom of my being, while the forms and modifications of this being vary, is precisely to *endure*. Wherever I recognise a stable and permanent principle in the succession of phenomena, and the variety of accidents, I recognise things which endure, and the consciousness of my own duration, joined to memory, helps me to measure the duration of the beings which environ me. Hence, with the aid of those ingenious instruments which represent the lapse of time to the eye by appropriate movements, those notions of an hour, a day, a century, which constitute what I call concrete and determinate duration.

2. The notions of indefinite space and time.

2. It is equally clear, that when I represent to myself an extension, however vast, and a duration, however prolonged, I conceive a duration and an extension yet vaster, and beyond these yet vaster again, and so on indefinitely. And it is well worthy of remark, that this intellectual operation is accomplished in the inverse direction, by a process which is equally necessary. Every extension, however small, is conceived as divisible into two or more parts, each of these into smaller parts, and so on. Just so with the shortest imaginable duration. The indivisible instant, and the indivisible point, are ideal limits, which I am always approaching without ever reaching

dreams. Experience will at any time "attain to something of prophetic strain." Experience, forecasting results in a condition when we are abstracted from disturbance, and assisted by imagination, may give presages, whose fulfilment appears truly marvellous.]

them, even as it is impossible for me to conceive distinctly an extension which is the greatest possible, or a duration which is the *maximum* of all conceivable duration. These limits fly before my mind with that eternal flight of which Pascal has spoken. I may expand my conceptions to their broadest verge, or contract them to their narrowest point. The infinitely little, like the infinitely great, recoils before me, and both, as it were, sink towards the inaccessible absolute.

Such seems to me to be the constitution of the human mind. I do not yet attempt to draw conclusions from it touching the nature of things. I limit myself to stating facts, and analyzing notions. But, if I have seen rightly, the notions of space and time have a character which only belongs to themselves. Before I had to do with sensible realities, with objects concrete, multiplied, and particular. Not so here; I observe a thousand different extensions; I can conceive but one space. I have the idea of all sorts of unequal durations; I can conceive but one time. My eyes see the extension of the heavens; my hands touch that of the earth; my consciousness grasps, and so to say touches and sees my personal duration. Time and space are not perceived by my senses; they are conceived by my understanding.

3. It remains to examine if these notions of undetermined space, and of indefinite time, can be confounded with those which I have still to analyse, the notions of immensity and of eternity. This is not a question of reasoning and of system; it is a question of facts and of analysis. But, in point of fact, when I reflect that this world is

3. The notions of immensity and of eternity.



formed of contingent things—that all is born, changes, and perishes—if I put the supposition that the world suddenly ceases to exist, that I am left its last wreck, and that I close my last day, one thing invincibly resists these efforts of my mind to annihilate all beings—and that is the notion of absolute being. All which exists not of itself, and which has a borrowed being, may cease to exist. But we cannot conceive that which is the very source of beings annihilated, either in the centre of its nature, or in the attributes and essential acts which constitute it. Thus, then, my hypothesis being realized, there are no more creatures, but the creative power remains. This immense world, with the bodies in myriads upon myriads of different figures which form it, and the prodigious number of living beings who are developed in it, is no more. But the power of God always extends to numberless worlds. It precedes, enfolds, and surpasses all ages. In short, in spite of the absolute destruction of all determined extension, and of all actual duration, God is always immense and eternal.

Here, then, are two new notions, of immensity and eternity, which I find in my mind, as real, natural, and universal as the notions of duration and extension, and again of space and time.

The question now must be to decide what I have a right to affirm upon the nature of the objects represented by this triple series of notions. We have to pass, as the Germans say, from the subjective to the objective—a process which is justly dreaded, and which I only wish to attempt with extreme caution.

First, it seems to me clear that I have no reason <sup>Duration and extension are</sup> for doubting duration and extension to be real <sup>real.</sup> things. For the duration that I can know is my own. It is given to me by consciousness and memory. It is not an abstract conception. It is an immediate intuition of the inward sense, prolonged by memory. I know and am certain that I endure, as I know and am certain that I exist. To deny the reality of duration is to deny consciousness and memory, it is to overthrow the foundation of all knowledge and of all certainty.

It is not more reasonable to question the reality of extension. For all my senses bear witness to it with more or less clearness, but with the same strength of conviction. Besides, consciousness and the senses are not two separate functions of the human mind. The *Ego* of consciousness is not a solitary, abstract, self-involved *I*, knowing nothing but itself, a phantom created by the artifice of systems. It does not exist a single moment without action, without experiencing sensations and producing movements which place its existence in relation with its organs and with the outer world. Self-consciousness is therefore inseparable from the perception of sensible objects, and these are revealed to our mind under the general condition of extension. There is no doubt then of the objective value of these first notions, the simplest and most familiar in the domain of thought.

From these lower regions, proportioned by their <sup>Immensity and etern-</sup> grossness and narrowness to our mortal eyes, let <sup>nity real</sup> us rise to a higher point. <sup>also.</sup> Adjourning for a little these notions of space and time, let us essay that which is most sublime in this order of speculation,

I mean the ideas of immensity and eternity. When we arrive in that hidden and divine world, where there is no more limit, change, or imperfection, our thought may well be dazzled. What are eternity and immensity? Are they actual attributes, real and absolute determinations of the divine nature, or purely human aspects of the forms under which we, created beings, plunged in the mutations of time and subject to the limitations of space, represent to ourselves the infinite power and the immutable essence of God? These are questions which I should not attempt to solve finally with a few words. But it seems to me, *prima facie*, that with the same right that I affirm the existence of an all-perfect Being, do I also equally assert that this being is absolutely immutable, simple, powerful, and consequently absolutely incapable of all change, division, or limitation whatever. This absolute immutability in regard to the flux of changing things is eternity. This power, at once simple and infinite, capable of producing an infinite number of existences without division, is immensity. Thus, immensity and eternity appear to me as real as God himself, and consequently as real as this extension which my hands grasp, and this duration whose reality is commingled with my own.

Notions of  
space and  
time *ideal*,  
not *chimeri-*  
*cal*.

Here is an undoubted group of real existences.

But have the notions of space and time the same objective value? I believe not. I am apt to think, on the contrary, that space and time, considered in themselves, abstracting from the sensible universe and from God, have only an ideal existence. Newton himself, in distinguishing

concrete and determined duration from time in general, names the latter *absolute and mathematical time*.<sup>1</sup> The term *mathematical* is well applied, for it is with time as with other mathematical things, such as unity, equality, number, a point, a triangle, a sphere. I admit that these are not ordinary abstractions like the abstract and general ideas of colour, matter, existence, and the like. In fact, the geometrical point, the triangle and the sphere, the superficies and the line are absolute things. We can conceive them as types of which sensible objects are but imperfect copies. While the physical and natural philosopher vainly looks in the most regular and finished objects of nature for a perfectly plane superficies, for curves developed according to a precise law, for triangles perfectly similar, for really equal radii of the same circle, the geometrician, living in a higher and purer region, contemplates immutable objects, enclosed in some sort in the bounds of an exact definition, and interlinked by precise relations. Hence those formulæ, theories, and axioms, whose luminous order forms the mathematical sciences. If it belongs to the scientific man to describe the real world, it is the property of the geometrician to construct an *ideal* world. It is very far from my intention to say that geometry is a science of chimeras, and that its objects have not their proper value. The basis of geometry is in the

<sup>1</sup> Tempus absolutum, verum, et mathematicum, in se et naturâ suâ sine relatione ad externum quodvis, aequaliter fluit, alioque nomine dicitur duratio; relatum, apparens, et vulgare est sensibilis et externa quævis durationis per motum mensura (seu accurata, seu inæquabilis) qua vulgus vice veri temporis utitur; ut Hora, Dies, Mensis, Annus."—*Newton's Princ.*, lib. i., defin. 1.

necessary concepts, and universal laws of the reason; on this footing it is of great value, and possesses a solidity that can never be shaken, based as it is upon the intelligence of the eternal Geometer, who is God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

I am, therefore, inclined to think that the pure notions of time and space are of the same family as the objects of mathematics, which, without being *chimerical*, have no other than an ideal existence. Besides, what necessity do you see for conceiving time as an absolute reality, independent of all real succession, and of every mutable being? Absolute time, says Newton, considered in itself, flows on equally (*æqualiter fluit*.) I confess that I cannot absolutely understand as real this "equable flowing on" of absolute time, the universe being hypothetically annihilated. There would then be no more changing beings, conse-

<sup>1</sup> [I am sure that M. Saisset would thank me for quoting the following beautiful sentences, written by Isaac Barrow, Newton's tutor, in a fly-leaf of Apollonius. Montucla considered Barrow a poor philosopher, for believing in God, but admits him to be a "learned geometer" (*Histoire des Mathématiques*, art. vii., tom. ii., p. 88). A recent witty French writer is just enough to place him somewhat above those English sermon-writers, whom one reads, not from pleasure, but "pour faire son salut." If M. Saisset wishes for any other specimen of Barrow's style, I would venture to refer him to "The Christian Faith Explained and Vindicated," sermons vi. to xii., on the proof of the being of God, and of the creation of the world by Him—Ο Θεός γεωμετρῆς.

"Tu autem, Domine, quantus es Geometra! quum enim hæc scientia nullos terminos habeat; cum in sempiternum novarum theorematum inventioni locus relinquatur, etiam penes humanum ingenium, tu uno hæc omnia intuitu perspecta habes absque catenâ consequentiarum, absque tædio demonstrationum. Ad cetera pœnè nihil facere potest intellectus noster; in his conspiratur ab omnibus . . . Te igitur vel ex hac re amare gaudeo, te suspicor, atque illum diem desiderare suspiris fortibus in quo purgatâ mente, et claro oculo, non hæc solum omnia absque hac successivâ et laboriosâ imaginandi curâ, verum multo plura et majora ex tuâ bonitate et immensissimâ sanctissimâque benignitate conspiciere et scire conceditur.]

quently no more change, no more duration. What of time? The poet shall answer.

Sur les monde détruits les temps dort immobile.

But if time is immoveable, it does not flow. This is no longer time. It is eternity, of which time is but the image.

See, again, the conclusion to which we are led by this theory, that all duration which flows on supposes not only a being who endures, but also time. For, since time itself is something which flows on, we must suppose beyond time another time, and so on. So with space. If you maintain that all extension supposes as containing an absolute extension which you call space, this space being itself conceived as extended, will imply another space, so that you will always be seeking absolute space, just as you were seeking absolute time, without being able to attain it.

Other results of the theory that all duration implies time.

But, it may be urged, motion implies the *vacuum*, and that is tantamount to absolute space. I answer that the question of the *vacuum* is not yet solved. Descartes and Huyghens, who, I apprehend, were no ordinary physical philosophers, have denied the *vacuum*, and maintained that motion is perfectly compatible with the hypothesis of the *plenum*. I am not completely ignorant of all that the vacuists, from Leucippus and Democritus to Newton, and from Newton to modern chemists, have objected to this hypothesis. But what I know greatly better is, that this point is no problem of physics, or of chemistry, but of the highest metaphysics,—an insoluble problem, I fear, since neither observation, induction, and ex-

Answer to the solution that *vacuum* supposes absolute space.

perience, nor pure speculation, appear capable of solving it definitely.

Error of  
Clarke and  
Newton, in  
conceiving  
space as  
an attri-  
bute of  
God.

After all, I am little concerned in the side which may be taken on this question. Even if my views on space and time are not received as true, the preceding analysis entitles me to assert that Newton and Clarke, in confounding the notion of space with that of immensity, and the notion of time with that of eternity, have committed a capital error, which could not but lead to false and dangerous views. Surely it is a serious thing to conceive space as an attribute of God! Clarke may inscribe the name of Spinoza beside that of Hobbes and the most notorious atheists. The simplest logic imposes on him the very theory for which he reproves the author of the *Ethica*: *Deus est res extensa*. For if the immensity of God is, as Clarke plainly says, only infinite extension, it follows that God has length, breadth, and depth, that He is divisible *ad infinitum*, and other monstrous consequences. But, Clarke would reply, the extension of God is infinite. This is just Spinoza's answer, and it is vain; for extension, be it finite or infinite, has always the same properties, and the same essence.<sup>1</sup>

Equally  
erroneous  
to make  
time an  
attribute  
of God.

To make of time an attribute of God is an opinion apparently less revolting, but really not less untenable. What if Newton affirms that God's duration is infinite? Finite or infinite, duration always implies succession, variation, change. It is absurd to say that the immutable One varies, that the eternal One changes. And if you reply that He endures without changing,

<sup>1</sup> *Ethica*, Part 1., Schol., Prop. xx.

you may justly fear that you are uniting contradictions, and falling into utter confusion of thought.

If it were not overbold, I would now draw these three conclusions :

<sup>1</sup> That the Newtonian school, in admitting space and time as real, absolute, and independent of extended substances, and of beings which endure, has pledged itself to a hazardous hypothesis.

<sup>2</sup> That it has committed a serious psychological error, in confounding the notions of space and time with those of eternity and immensity.

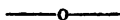
<sup>3</sup> That its theory of God, conceived as embracing the universe by an infinite extension and duration, appears irreconcilable with the simplicity and immutability of the absolute Being.

Three errors of the Newtonian Theodicea.  
<sup>1</sup> Real space and time, independent of extension and duration.  
<sup>2</sup> Notions of space and time confused with those of immensity and eternity.  
<sup>3</sup> Theory of God embracing the universe by infinite extension and duration.



## Fifth Treatise.

### *The Theism of Leibnitz.*<sup>1</sup>



Agreement  
and dif-  
ference of  
Descartes  
and New-  
ton.

WHEN I gather up my reminiscences and impressions, and try to survey in one comprehensive glance, the two countries which I have just visited—in one of which Descartes speaks in magisterial tones, while the other listens to none but Newton—I find some beautiful harmonies between these regions of the intellect; but I also see numerous contrasts, and more than one perplexing discordance.

It is, indeed, perfectly clear that Descartes and Newton, Malebranche and Samuel Clarke, in spite of all their differences, own the same God. For with all alike the God whom they recognise is the Being who is perfect, independent, and complete in Himself, the Creator and Lawgiver of the universe, the supreme object of love and worship for all intelligent creatures.

But, on the other hand, I cannot deny that the consonance of these great thinkers is frequently jarred by the secret tendency of their systems.

<sup>1</sup> [Leibniz is unquestionably the more correct orthography; but I have not thought it worth while to deviate from universal usage.]

They all place God the Creator at the origin of things. But Descartes forms to himself so singular an idea of the Divine omnipotence, that the creative act appears alternately arbitrary to the point of capriciousness, and determined to the verge of absolute necessity. Discrepan-  
ces and  
errors in  
Descartes.

Malebranche, who at first, under a better inspiration, as I think, re-established the Divine wisdom and goodness on a parallel line with His omnipotence, ended by absorbing into God all being, all action, all life, so that this vast universe, ruled by the simplest and most beautiful laws, appears to be inhabited by shadows. Male-  
branche.

Newton himself, that severe and positive genius, the mortal enemy of chimeras, too much absorbed, perhaps, in the contemplation of the physical order, conceives God as displaying His being in space and time, at the risk of degrading Him from the glories of His spiritual existence to the gross and shifting life of the universe. Shall I not find at last a philosopher to grasp the great truths of spiritualism with such vigour as not to let one escape, and to maintain them all in their harmonious economy, pure from illusion and from error? Newton.

Certainly if such a philosopher ever existed, he can be no other than Leibnitz. Equal to Descartes and Newton in genius, he has the notable advantage over them of having come after them. He gathers together these grand heirlooms, and adds to them. By a marvellous correspondence between the epoch of his appearance, and the character of his genius, he unites two superior gifts, which might seem to be Character-  
istics of  
Leibnitz.

mutually exclusive, the creative and the critical faculty.<sup>1</sup> He is incomparably sagacious in hitting upon the strong and weak points in the thoughts of others, while he himself is a thinker of such originality as to have no equals, except among the greatest. It is an unprecedented spectacle to see the man, whose infinite curiosity is hardly satiated by the most universal reading which has ever been known, so far from being exhausted by his erudition, as to find in it new powers of imagination and of invention.

His intellectual  
training  
and career.

Nor was his genius moulded like that of the intellectual solitaires, Descartes and Newton, who disdained the past, and wished to draw every thread of their philosophy from their own stock. Leibnitz, on the contrary, gave himself up devotedly to the first masters, who fed his mind upon the Peripatetic philosophy. Far from being disgusted with Aristotle and the Schoolmen, the more deeply he studied, the more completely was he pleased with them. Meanwhile, the breath

<sup>1</sup> [Reid has somewhere observed that "it is genius, and not the want of it, that adulterates philosophy." Kant and Hume, Sir W. Hamilton remarks, held the same doctrine of the incompatibility of creative imagination with philosophical talent. The metaphysician, however, as the same great critic says, requires not less imagination than the poet, only of a different kind. In modern times especially, when poetry has become introverted and psychological, the future philosopher has often made his *début* as a poet, like a plant which *flowers* before it *leafs*—

And last, a matron new, of sober mien,  
Yet radiant still, and with no earthly sheen,  
Whom as a faery child my childhood wooed,  
Even in my dawn of thought—Philosophy;  
Though then *unconscious of herself*, pardie,  
*She bore no other name than Poetry.*

*Coleridge, Garden of Boccaccio.*

Strabo (Lib. i., Geograph, quoted by Patrick, Numbers xxi. 30), says, *οι παλαιοι φιλοσοφίαν τινά λέγουσι πρώτην τήν ποιητικήν.*]

of the *Renaissance*, which had been let loose over Europe for two centuries, reached him in his school at Leipsic. Still remaining faithful to Aristotle, he acquired a taste for Plato and his new interpreters. But the philosophy of the *Renaissance* was surpassed. Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, and Gassendi arose, and Europe resounded with their glory and their discoveries.

The Leipsic scholar, who had scarcely left his bench in school, adopted the new ideas. He became a Cartesian, almost a Spinozist. He arrived at Paris, where Malebranche and Arnaud received and initiated him. Huyghens, above all, aroused his nascent genius, and opened to him the world of high mathematics. He was anxious to see Newton, travelled to London, and returned to Paris, to lock himself up for several years, in meditation upon all the novelties which he had collected, and those which he was preparing himself. In returning to Germany, he took care to traverse Holland, where he visited Spinoza. Then, after other travels, and a long sojourn in Italy, he took up his residence in Hanover. At that time only, when he had arrived at maturity, after having visited Paris, London, Amsterdam, and Florence, and after a training of twenty years in studies and discoveries of every kind, mathematics, physics, and geology, law of nations and Jurisprudence, history, languages, and origin of nations—did he make a pause, and co-ordinate so many materials into an original conception.

But I shall not trust any one but himself to learn in detail all the phases of this mental evolution. Leibnitz relates what his mental dispositions

were, from entering college up to the period when he began the study of logic.

"Up to this moment," he says, "my taste for poetry and for polite literature had been so marked, that my friends were uneasy at it, fearing that the soft attraction of the Muses would lure me away from austerer and more serious studies. The event spared them this anxiety, for from the moment when I began the study of logic, I was fascinated with it. What seemed thorny to others, I passionately embraced. I did not confine myself to applying the rules. With a facility which surprised my masters, I raised difficulties, I meditated novelties, which I carefully noted down, for fear of forgetting them. I was delighted with Zabarella, Rubius, Fonseca, and other scholastic logicians, taking as much pleasure in them as I had previously found in Livy and the historians, and my progress was so rapid that I read off Suarez, as people read a novel."<sup>1</sup>

When he left college, he commenced the higher philosophical studies under the able direction of Thomasius, a man well versed in scholastic philosophy and classics. We may judge of his attainments by a theme, *De principio individui*, sustained in 1663 under the presidency of his tutor. He had not got beyond the scholastic Aristotle; he is plunged in the controversies of Scotists and Thomists. Modern ideas have hardly germinated in his mind, and one would almost suppose that

<sup>1</sup> See in the *Nouvelle's lettres et opuscules inédits de Leibnitz*, published by M. Foucher de Careil (1857), the piece entitled *Vita Leibnitii*; a work by Leibnitz himself, of which the autograph is preserved in the library at Hanover.

he was quite outside the circle of ideas which belong to the *Renaissance*. But when he begins to breathe the outer air, he will not be long in reading Plato and Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, and Patrizzi. We see traces of them in his *Ars Combinatoria*, a kind of thinking machine, imitated from Raymond Lully, Kircher, and Giordano Bruno. A little later he wrote to a friend, "When I was quite a child, I learned Aristotle; even the scholastics did not repel my curiosity, and I was not tired of them in a hurry. But besides this, Plato and Plotinus gave me some satisfaction, without speaking of other ancient authors whom I consulted. Afterwards, emancipated from the common schools, I lighted upon the modern. I recollect that I walked alone in a wood near Leipsic, called the Rosenthal, at the age of fifteen years, to deliberate whether I should hold *substantial forms*. Finally, mechanism carried the day, and led me to apply myself to mathematics."<sup>1</sup>

Modern ideas appeared to the nascent genius of Leibnitz as a sort of general rebellion against the Aristotelian physics, that is to say, as a new philosophy of nature. Heretofore, the phenomena of the universe had been explained by substantial forms, intentional species, quiddities, and eccetiës, quaint monsters, which drew their origin from the ill-assorted union of Christian theology with the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. The light of Cartesianism dawned. This host of phantoms disappeared. Philosophy broke away from the chains of theology. The new physical system came to an open rupture with scholastic meta-

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre à M. Rémond de Montmort* in Dutens, Tom. V., p. 5.

physics. The phenomena of this vast universe were explained by the mere variations of extension, figure, and notion. The problem of the world, reduced to a mechanical problem, appeared on the point of being solved with a clearness and simplicity which were hitherto unknown. This great revolution carried Leibnitz along with it. He declared himself a mechanist and a Cartesian, with him for the future convertible terms. He delighted in Descartes; but as a physical philosopher. He gave the name of Cartesians to all the modern partisans of mechanism, to Bacon and Galileo, even to those who were furthest from Descartes, like Hobbes and Gassendi. "Here," said he, "are the true Cartesians."<sup>1</sup> Leibnitz pushed his fervour for the masters of mechanism so far as to incline to the system of Democritus. He confesses on one occasion: "At first, when I shook off the yoke of Aristotle, I gave into the *vacuum* and the atomic system, for it is that which fills the imagination most."<sup>2</sup>

It was no doubt at this period that Leibnitz felt a momentary attraction to the fatalism of Spinoza. "You know," he says at the commencement of his *Nouveaux Essais*, "that formerly I went too far, and began to lean to the Spinozists, who leave God nothing but infinite power, recognising neither His perfection nor His wisdom, and despising the investigation of final causes, while they derive all things from a brute necessity. But these new lights cured me, and

<sup>1</sup> *Epistola ad Thomasium*, written in 1669.

<sup>2</sup> *Système nouveau de la Nature*, Erdmann's edition, p. 124.

since that period, I sometimes assume the name of Theopilus." <sup>1</sup>

So early as 1669, in one of his first essays, the anti-Nizolius, he had begun to make some reservations upon several points of the Cartesian philosophy. He did not wish to be confounded with those servile Cartesians who limit themselves to paraphrasing their master. It was scarcely worth while to overthrow Aristotle, for the purpose of substituting another idol. Taking one idol against another, he would even have preferred the elder superstition. "There is more truth in the *Physics* of Aristotle than in the *Meditationes* of Descartes, and I will even venture to assert that that physical system may subsist whole and entire in the bosom of the reformed philosophy." <sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to observe these first traits of eclecticism,—this idea of a possible conciliation between Aristotle and Descartes, between dynamism and mechanism. But, unless I am mistaken, Leibnitz as yet possessed but an imperfect knowledge of the new philosophy. He had read neither the *Geometry* nor *Dioptrica* of Descartes. He had not yet left Germany. His attention, too, was distracted from philosophy by the law of nations, politics, and jurisprudence. Consequently he only saw externally, and at a distance, the great movement of thought, whose centre was at Paris. He arrived there in 1672, a decisive epoch in his career. He was twenty-four years of age. His mind was overflowing with knowledge and with ideas, but he had not yet found

<sup>1</sup> *Nouveaux Essais*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistola ad Thomasium*, 3 and 4.



his way. He saw Malebranche, Arnaud, and Huyghens. These were his initiators, as he openly acknowledged.

"In my early years, I was well enough versed in the subtilties of the Thomists and the Scotists. When I left school, I flung myself into the arms of jurisprudence and history. But my travels introduced me to those distinguished persons, who gave me a taste for mathematics. I gave myself up to them with an almost unbounded passion for the four years which I spent in Paris."<sup>1</sup>

These distinguished persons are those whom I have already named: Arnauld, Malebranche, Huyghens, and some others, among whom I may name the learned opponent of Descartes, Huet; and I should especially add Newton and Collins. For in the course of the four years which Leibnitz reckons as passed at Paris, from 1672 to 1676, he travelled in England, and saw Newton and his friends at Cambridge and London. He offered to the Royal Society his *Theoria Motus Concreti*, just as he had offered to the Academy of Sciences his *Theoria Motus Abstracti*, works full of genius, but in which the young innovator was as yet suspended between Descartes and Newton.

From 1676 to 1685 I find Leibnitz taking side more distinctly against Cartesians. The period of initiation was over, and that of opposition begins. Even at Paris he was pressing Male-

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Lettres*, &c., published by M. Foucher de Careil (1857). See the piece entitled, *Discours sur la demonstration de l'existence de Dieu*, p. 23.

branche with objections, and had even obliged him to yield upon the question of the quantity of motion in the universe.<sup>1</sup> A little after, he saw Spinoza at the Hague, and proposed many difficulties to him.

"I passed some hours after dinner with Spinoza. He did not clearly see the defects in the rules of motion by M. Descartes, and was surprised when I proved to him that they violated the equality of cause and effect."<sup>2</sup>

For some years following, he did not cease to direct penetrating criticisms against Cartesianism, which, it is true, only bore as yet upon particular points, but behind which one feels that a general attack was in preparation. In 1678, he treats the celebrated argument of the fifth meditation as a *specious sophism*, and only consents to subscribe to it, on condition of being allowed to complete it.<sup>3</sup> In 1684, in a very substantial little work, entitled *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate, et ideis*, he attacks the Cartesian theory of the distinctive characteristic of truth, and for the criterion drawn from *evidence*,<sup>4</sup> he professes to substitute

<sup>1</sup> See the unedited correspondence of Malebranche and Leibnitz.—Cousin, *Philosophie Cartésienne*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Foucher de Careil. *Réfutation inédite de Spinoza par Leibnitz*, preface, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Œuvres Philosophiques*, Erdmann's edition, p. 78, cf. *Nouveaux Essais*, lib. IV. c. X.

<sup>4</sup> [In the sense of *evidentness*—"There are two things implied necessarily in this word *knowledge*; one is *truth*, the other *evidence*. *Evidence* is the concomitance of a man's *conception* with the words that signify such conception in the act of ratiocination. When a man reasoneth with his lips only. . . . yet are not his conclusions evident to himself, for if the words alone were sufficient, a parrot might be taught as well to know truth as to speak it. Evidence is to truth as the sap to the tree, which, so far as it creepeth along with the body and branches, keepeth then alive; where it forsaketh them they die; for this evidence, which is meaning with our words, is the life of truth."—Hobbes' *Human Nature*, chapter VI.]

another, namely, the analysis and connection of ideas. At last, Leibnitz, passing from skirmishes to war on a grand scale, declared that the philosophy of Descartes is radically erroneous, and bears within it the germs of Spinozism. The critical epoch in the genius of Leibnitz was now terminated. With one stroke he indicated the weak point in the Cartesian system, and laid down the principle of a new philosophy. From 1685, I find him in full possession of this principle with all the laws of its essential developments. He had entered upon his definitive period, that of organization.

In a letter to Thomas Burnet, he writes—"I greatly approve what you say of Mr. Locke's method of thinking over and over again upon the subjects of which he treats. It is very much my method also; and I have not taken a final part in important questions, before I have thought and rethought more than ten times, and after having again examined the opinion of others. In this way, I am thoroughly prepared upon matters which only depend upon meditation. Many of my opinions have only come to a stop after a deliberation of twenty years. For I began to reflect when I was very young, and was scarcely fifteen years old, when I used to walk whole days in a wood to decide between Aristotle and Democritus. Meanwhile I have changed and rechanged upon the acquisition of new lights; and it is only about twelve years since I began to feel myself satisfied, and arrived at demonstration upon matters which formerly appeared incapable of it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Thomas Burnet.*

This letter fixes the culminating point in the intellectual career of Leibnitz. It is dated in 1697, from which it follows that 1685 is the epoch of the definitive formation of his system.<sup>1</sup> He was nearly forty years of age; and when he speaks of twenty years meditations, it is because he fixes the beginning, not at the somewhat too juvenile walks in the woods of the Rosenthal in 1661, nor even at the completely scholastic theme *De Principio individui* in 1663, but with his first original publication *De Arte Combinatoria* in 1666.

Let us see the leading idea of this system. Let us examine how Leibnitz was led on by the progress of his thoughts, across scholasticism, the Renaissance and the moderns, by his reading and his travels, by his discoveries of every kind, and especially by his obstinate struggle against the philosophy of Descartes.

<sup>1</sup> According to him, the great error of Cartesianism is the doctrine of the passivity of substances. In the physical world, the Cartesians conceive matter as destitute of all energy, and reduced to extension. But this is a pure abstraction, so that they must keep up hypotheses and paralogisms to get out of this imaginary world and regain reality.

Leading  
idea of  
Leibnitz.

<sup>1</sup> Polemically. The capital fault of the Cartesian physics is the reduction of matter to mere extension.

There is the same error in the moral world. The human soul, passive and inert, without any proper action of its own, is nothing but pliant wax under the hand of God—or rather an assemblage of modes, without connection and without unity.

Parallel  
error in  
the moral  
world.

<sup>1</sup> This date could, if necessary, be confirmed by M. Grotefend's recent publication *Correspondance de Leibnitz avec Arnaud*. These letters are written in 1686. Leibnitz appears in them armed at all points, and fighting in the name of a complete system.

This is the extreme conclusion which a perfectly logical mind reduces to absolute fatalism.

And in the conception of God.

What, finally, can be the God of this mechanical and abstract universe, but an abstraction also? For since, external to him, there is no true being, but merely shadows of existence, it follows that he produces nothing actual and real. And thus are we constrained to reduce Him to a substance without force and without life, or to dissipate Him in the torrent of the shifting phenomena of the universe.

2. Constructively. The central point of Leibnitz' system—"every substance is essentially a force."

Such are the main features of that victorious polemic, which, clearing the ground before Leibnitz, allowed him to lay the foundation of a new system. In his eyes *every substance is essentially a force*. Active force is everywhere. It is the true principle of all corporeal phenomena. It exists in the plant, the animal, the man, the angel. It is upon earth, and in the highest heavens. It is the foundation of all beings.

How this central point was arrived at.

Is it by physics or natural history, by psychology or abstract considerations, that Leibnitz arrived at the fundamental idea of his system? I believe by all in combination, and first by physics and mathematics.

Mathematically and physically.

"I did not penetrate into the deepest mathematics,<sup>1</sup> before my intercourse with M. Huyghens at Paris. But when I was investigating the final reasons of mechanism and the laws of motion, I was surprised to discover that it was impossible to find them in mathematics, and that I must turn back to metaphysics. This led me back to the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre à M. Rémond de Montmort in Dutens, t. V. p. 7.*

*entelecheias*,<sup>1</sup> and from matter to form, and, after many corrections and advances in my notions, made me understand that *monads*, or simple substances, are the only true substances. I found then that their nature consists in *force*, and that it was thus necessary to conceive them *after the notion that we have of souls*.<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, are the atoms of Leibnitz. But they are not atoms of *matter*. They are atoms of *substance*, *monads*, in other words, vital units, forces universally diffused, which, in their unequal perfection, in the variety of their degrees, in the series of their evolutions, in the continuous gradation of their kinds, made up the drama of the creation, upon the face of the earth and athwart the immensity of time and space.

*Monadology.*  
Monads  
not to be  
confounded  
with atoms

Nor with  
points—  
they are  
rather  
“meta-  
physical  
points.”

We must confound these monads, neither with *physical* points (the atoms of Epicurus, and the molecules of the moderns), nor with *mathematical* points (the ideal extremities of lines). Let us hear Leibnitz, “Material atoms are contrary to reason, seeing that they are composed of parts. Those are only substantial atoms, that is to say, real units, absolutely without parts, which are the principles of action and the last elements in the

<sup>1</sup> [*Ἐντελέχεια*, “the actual being of a thing as opposed to potentiality,” (Scott and Liddell, s. *voc.*) It is specially applied to the soul, which is the *ἐντελέχεια* of the body, as that by which it actually exists, “ut ipsa sit autor omnium functionum, omnium motuum, etiam contrariorum in eodem corpore, cujus potens est.”—See more on *ἐντ.* in Jul. C. Scaliger De Subtil. Exerc. CCCVII. 12—though even Scaliger’s matchless power of saying things well, will hardly fulfil the hopes excited by his elegant prelude, “Adeanus paulisper hortos atque amoenitates sapientum, ut ex eorum flosculis animæ nostræ coronam victoriæ texamus.”]

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Système Nouveau de la Nature*, and in Dutens, t. II., p. 1 and 49.

analysis of substances. They may be called *metaphysical points*. They have something vital in them, and a kind of perception. The physical points are only apparently indivisible. Mathematical points are exact, but they are mere modalities. *Metaphysical points*, or substance (constituted by forms or souls), are the only exact and real points, and, without them, there would be nothing real, since without real units there could not be multitude."<sup>1</sup>

This central point of the Leibnizian System arrived at, not only by physics and geometry, but by psychology and moral science.

Thus was Leibnitz led by physics and geometry to the idea of active force, conceived as constituting the substance of things. He arrived at it also, at the same time, by psychology, by morality, by every track along which observation, calculation, and genius could conduct him.

"Let us examine a little more carefully," he says on one occasion, "the opinion of those who deny a true and proper action to created things. Can any one be found to doubt that the soul thinks and wills, that we draw in ourselves, from ourselves, and from the stock of our own nature volitions and thoughts, and all this spontaneously? This would be, in the first place, to deny human liberty, and impute our evils to God; above all, it would be to reject our inward experience, and that witness of consciousness which attests to us that those actions which our opponents irrationally transfer to God are our own. On the contrary, allow our souls to possess the inward power of producing immanent actions, or (which is the same thing) of acting immanently: this granted, nothing hinders but that there should be in other souls,

<sup>1</sup> *De ipsâ Naturâ*, Erdmann, p. 126.

or forms, or natures of substance, the same force which is in us. Nay, it is a logical conclusion."<sup>1</sup>

"You will possibly object that we can only know force by its effects, and not such as it is in itself. I answer that it would be so, if we had not a soul, and if we did not know it; but our soul, as known by us, has perceptions and appetites, and its nature is contained in that."

Thus, then, within and without us, there is everywhere active force. It fills the universe with the inexhaustible variety of its forms. In the animal, below him again, and down to the lowest steps of the material world, wherever there is being there is life. Let us not stop at those shifting phenomena which play before the senses, and at once delight and deceive the imagination. When the eye of reason once pierces beneath this gross material wrapper, we find unity under variety, substance under accidents, and with substance life and action. All nature appears to us as a system of forces, homogeneous in essence, but developed in infinitely different degrees, and disposed according to harmonious laws.

So far all is well, and Leibnitz is delighted with the beauty, the simplicity, and the grandeur of his conception. But a serious difficulty arises, when we come to explain the exact correspondence and perfect harmony which subsist between all the forces of the universe.

Force in the universe.

The "Doctrina fœderis," and the intercommunication of substances a difficulty to this theory.

"After having established these points," says Leibnitz, as he closes his exposition of his idea of active force, "I believed that I had plain sailing

<sup>1</sup> Cf., *Remarques sur le sentiment du P. Malebranche*, p. 450.



before me. But when I began to meditate upon the union of the soul with the body I was at sea again. For I found no way to explain how the body can make anything pass to the soul, nor how one substance can communicate with another created substance."<sup>1</sup>

Here, in fact, is the real difficulty in all its generality and depth. The question is to understand not only the influence of the soul upon the body—a profound mystery upon any hypothesis,—but, generally, how any being can, in any way, go out of its own sphere of existence and action to exercise an influence upon the development of another being, whether of a different species, or of an analogous nature. For such an analogy does not remove the difficulty. If we obliterate the too sharp line of distinction which Descartes has drawn between the soul and the body, between the spiritual and the corporeal nature, between thought and extension; and if we further conceive, with Leibnitz, that all beings are analogous in essence; the problem is simplified, but it is not resolved. Leibnitz thinks that we should not despair of finding a solution, and a solution drawn from the very heart of the difficulty. He admits that the real physical action of one substance upon another is inconceivable, and consequently naturally impossible. A miracle would be necessary to make one force really act upon another. But nothing is more contrary to the scientific spirit than to postulate miracles, and nothing more absurd than the notion of perpetual and universal

<sup>1</sup> *Système nouveau de la nature, et de la communication des substances.* Erdmann, p. 127.

miracles. On the other hand, every substance is a force; every force is, by its very nature, active, and continually in action; all its successive acts and states form a continuous series, where each present state has its root in an anterior state, and so on. Thus we can conceive each of the forces which compose the universe as enfolding in itself from the beginning all the series of its developments. And now, admit that these forces are in harmony by their natural constitution; and then all will go on, as if they really acted one upon the other, though each acts only upon itself.

Solution by  
the theory  
of pre-  
established  
harmony.

See, then, the marvellous spectacle which the universe presents to us. Here is an infinite number of forces, of living units, identical in essence, different in the degree of their developments. These different degrees are classified in families, in *genera*, and *species* which rise, by a continuous gradation, from brute nature, in which life slumbers, to the splendours of spiritual existence. And we must comprise in this, with minerals, plants, animals, and men, all the grosser or sublimer beings who fill up the intervals, people other worlds, and make up the infinite whole of the universe. But each of these beings has need of none but itself to develop itself through the ages, and to draw from its proper bosom the entire sequence of its successive evolutions and transformations. And yet, as these beings are all intermingled, and as there is a certain correspondence between their developments, it seems as if all beings acted upon one another, and as if the life of the universe were a struggle. Rather is it a harmony. Every soul, without going out

of itself, acts in perfect accordance with all others. It is like a little world. It represents the universe from its own point of view. It is like a living mirror in which the entire universe is represented.

It can easily be conceived that Leibnitz is delighted with this conception, and with the numberless advantages which he discovers in it. He finds in it the satisfaction of his two great instincts, the critical and the creative; the traditional and innovating, the eclectic and original.

"I have tried," he exclaims, "to disinter and to re-unite the truth, buried and dissipated under the opinions of different sects of philosophers; and I believe that I have added something of my own, to make some steps in advance."

Leibnitz wishes to make all systems enter into his own—even those which were most suspected of charlatanism and chimerical mysticism, such as those of Cardan and Van Helmont. There is an admirable passage in his *Nouveaux Essais*, where Leibnitz, under the name of Theophilus, celebrates his own system with marvellous freshness, enthusiasm, and grandeur.

The assimilative and eclectic character of the philosophy of Leibnitz as conceived by himself.

"I have been struck by a new system. Ever since I seem to myself to see a new face upon the inner nature of things. This system seems to unite Plato with Democritus, Aristotle with Descartes, the schoolmen with the moderns, theology and morality with reason. It appears to gather in what is best from all sides, and then to go further than any one has yet advanced. . . . I now see what Plato meant when he took matter for an imperfect and transitory being, and what Aristotle intended by his *entelecheia*. I see the promise which even Democritus made of another life

in Pliny: how far the sceptics were right in declaiming against the senses; how we may rationally explain those who have endowed all things with life and perception, such as Cardan, Campanella, and better than them, the late Platonic Countess of Cannaway,<sup>1</sup> and our friend the late François Mercurius Van Helmont (though perplexed with unintelligible paradoxes), with his friend the late Henry More.<sup>2</sup>

“Had I leisure, I should compare my own dogmas with those of the ancients and of other able men. The truth is more widely scattered than one is apt to suppose. But it is very often overloaded, very often also wrapped up, and ever enfeebled, mutilated, and corrupted, by additions which spoil it, or at least render it less useful. In causing these traces of truth to be remarked in the ancients, or, to speak more generally, in our *anterior*s—we shall draw the gold out of the mud, the diamond from the mine, and light from darkness. This, in fact, will be *perennis quædam philosophia*.”

What is most satisfactory in his theory is, that it puts in a new light the first and greatest of all verities, the existence of God. It is clear that all this system leads to God. For it is necessary that this infinite number of forces should have its root in a primitive force. And it is necessary also that this wonderful constitution of monads, this continual scale of their degrees, this infallible correspondence of their successive states, should

The “sufficient reason” of the co-ordination of monads, a Theistic proof.

<sup>1</sup> [Is this the *Viscountess Conway*, to whom some of Henry More's philosophical works are dedicated?]

<sup>2</sup> Book I. c. i. Erdmann, p. 204.

have its *sufficient reason* in an intelligence which has created, foreseen, and co-ordinated all. Nothing, therefore, appears simpler to Leibnitz than the demonstration of the existence of God.

"The sufficient, or final reason," he writes, "must necessarily be outside the series of this detail of contingencies, how infinite soever it be. And thus, the last reason of things ought to be looked for in a necessary substance, in which the details of the changes are only eminently, as in its source, and this is that which we call God. But that substance being a sufficient reason of all this detail, which also is everywhere linked, there is only one God, and this God suffices."<sup>1</sup>

The Cartesian Theistic proof substantially accepted by Leibnitz.

Moreover, on this question of the existence of God, Leibnitz makes no effort to separate himself from the doctrine generally received among the Cartesians. Among the philosophers of that school the existence of God is considered as a very simple and almost immediate truth; and yet they believe that it is possible, and even necessary to demonstrate it. This is the express opinion of Leibnitz.<sup>2</sup> And so he holds the Cartesian proofs to be valid, especially that of the Fifth *Méditation*, only reserving to himself the right of making it more perfect, partly by simplifying it,<sup>3</sup> partly by filling it up as he thinks necessary to its completion,<sup>4</sup> in the hope which has always been pursued, but perhaps always baffled, of making it a perfect demonstration.

It is worthy of remark that Leibnitz, whilst

<sup>1</sup> *Principia Philosophiæ*, § 37, 38, 39. Erdmann, p. 708.

<sup>2</sup> Leibnitz—*Nouveaux Essais*, lib. iv. c. ix., x.

<sup>3</sup> *De la démonstration Cartésienne*. Erdmann, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Meditationes de cognitione veritate et ideis*, p. 80.

giving in his adhesion to the Cartesian proofs, does not confine himself to them. He reproaches the author of the *Méditations* with his exclusive spirit in this, as in many other matters.<sup>1</sup> Why should the old proofs be despised or rejected if they can serve the cause of God? Why, for instance, should the sensible and striking argument for final causes be eliminated, which can be rendered perfectly solid when it is kept within proper limits? Leibnitz observes, with that unfailing breadth of view and serene impartiality which are his characteristics: "I believe that almost all the means which have been used to prove the existence of God are good, and when perfected may be very serviceable; and I am by no means of opinion that that which is drawn from the order of things should be neglected."<sup>2</sup>

In this superior frame of mind, he accepts the Platonic proof by the eternal verities, praising Plato<sup>3</sup> for having conceived the Divine intellect as the region of ideas. He gives a favourable

<sup>1</sup> [This *exclusiveness* of the Cartesian school, in their Theistic proof has been noticed by Locke: "But yet, I think, this I may say, that it is an ill way of establishing this truth to lay the whole stress upon that foundation . . . and out of an over-fondness of that darling invention, cashier, or at least endeavour to invalidate, all other arguments, and forbid us to hearken to those proofs, as being weak or fallacious, which our own existence and the sensible parts of the universe offer so clearly and cogently to our thoughts, that I deem it impossible for a considering man to withstand them."—*Essay*, Book IV., chapter x. 7. "It is certainly of ill consequence to depreciate the solidest arguments hitherto urged in proof of the existence, for the sake only of magnifying a flight of fancy. When an imaginary proof is thus advanced as a real one, and not only so, but *superior* to all others, it then becomes more and more dangerous."—Waterland, *Dissertations upon the Argument à priori for proving the Existence of a First Cause*, chapter iii. 3.]

<sup>2</sup> *Nouveaux, Essais*, lib. iv. ch. x. § 8. Cf. *Lettre à l'abbé Nicaise*. Erdmann, p. 139 seq.

<sup>3</sup> *Epistola ad Hanschium*. Erdmann, p. 445.

sense to the opinion of Plotinus that every human intelligence contains in itself the intelligible world. He defends Malebranche, who had been attacked by Locke for having said that God is the place of minds as space is that of bodies.<sup>1</sup> And finally he subscribes, in some sense, the celebrated formula, "We see all in God."<sup>2</sup>

Form of  
Theistic  
proof given  
by Leib-  
nitz him-  
self.

Up to this point Leibnitz has not spoken in his own name. I shall now produce a proof more deeply marked with the peculiar impress of his genius, and which I think is all the more solid, because the regular processes of syllogistic reasoning are not visible in it. It thus exhibits nothing but the true foundation of all the demonstrations of God's existence. I mean the spontaneous act of reason which, under the contingent and finite, grasps the infinite and necessary being. I leave the author of the *Theodicea* to speak for himself:—

"God is the first reason of things. For those which are limited, like all which we see and of which we have experience, are contingent, and have nothing in them which renders their existence necessary; it being clear that time, space, and matter, which are united and uniform in themselves, and indifferent to everything, could receive other motions and forms in another order. We must, therefore, seek the reason for the existence of the world, which is the entire assemblage of contingent things; and we must look for it in the substance which bears the reason of its existence in itself, and which consequently is necessary and

<sup>1</sup> *Remarques sur le sentiment du P. Malebranche*, p. 451.

<sup>2</sup> *Examens du Principes*, du P. Malebranche, p. 690.

eternal. This cause must also be intelligent. For this world which exists, being contingent, and an infinity of other worlds being equally possible, and having, so to say, equal pretensions to existence with it, it follows that the cause of the world must have regard or relation to those possible worlds, to determine upon one. And this regard or relation of one existing substance to simple possibilities can be nothing else than the *understanding* which has the ideas of them, and to determine upon one can only be the act of the *will* which chooses. And it is the *POWER* of this substance which renders the will efficacious. Power tends to being, wisdom or understanding to truth, and will to good. And this intelligence must be infinite in every sense, and absolutely perfect in power, in wisdom, and in goodness, since it tends to all which is possible. And as all is connected, there is no place for the admission of more than one. Here, in a few words, is the proof of one God, with all His perfections, and of the origin of things by Him.”<sup>1</sup>

It is thus that Leibnitz, from the first pages of the *Essais de Théodicée*, reaches the point at which Descartes had stopped. It was sufficient for the author of the *Méditations* to have solidly established the existence of God. In presence of the various and profound problems raised by the contemplation of the Creator, he had left his speculations suspended, preferring to carry them on to other objects. Where the work of Descartes terminated that of Leibnitz began. The father

Leibnitz  
begins  
where Descartes  
ended.

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, Part 1. Cf. *Princ. Phil. seu theses in gratiam Principis Eugenii*, in Erdmann, p. 708.



of modern philosophy had laid the foundation ; his greatest disciple went on to construct the edifice.

First question on God, and His relations to the universe, raised by the Leibnizian system.

The Cartesian reformer had established that every substance is a force, and that in God absolute existence and absolute activity are identified. What was the first question which he had to answer? Evidently this: Whether God should be conceived as a force which enters upon action by the very necessity of its essence, in such sort that it can neither be conceived nor exist without a universe, where it is developed and realised, or whether He should be conceived as an activity, eternally self-contained, living with His own proper and independent life, and consequently at liberty not to go forth from Himself, as if to manifest Himself infinitely. This question brings on others. If God is conceived as the free creator of the universe, we are tempted to ask why He has created it rather than not; why He has created such an universe; at such a time; and in such a place? Then, how it is possible that this universe should contain free creatures, being the work of a God who foresees and governs all; and imperfect, sinful, and unhappy creatures, being the image of a God who is all-wise and all-good? Had Leibnitz pretended to satisfy himself completely upon these difficult questions, he would not, in my opinion, have been a really great philosopher. I can undoubtedly see that all these problems have occupied his thoughts, and that he has thrown light upon some of them; but in many others he has restricted himself to indicating the limit which no bold speculator can overpass,

without being lost in a region which is inaccessible to human reason.<sup>1</sup>

We know how Spinoza had solved the problem of the relation of God to the universe. According to him, God is the infinite substance of which bodies and souls are merely the modes. In this system there is no real and practical distinction between God and the universe; it is but an artifice of abstraction by which they are conceived or named separately. God, without the universe, is not a being who possesses a determinate existence, and lives with His proper life; He is but substance without its modes, that is to say, pure and undetermined being, conceived abstractedly, without the determinations which make His reality and His life. Then, the universe is as necessary as God; it is not a manifestation of God; it is His act; His life; God Himself. Why should we, henceforth, speak of the creature and the Creator? God, the Creator, is a God who is independent of His creatures, who is manifested by and reflected in them, but who is distinct from them. He is, in the language of the school, *causa transiens*, a cause which goes out of itself. The God of Spinoza, on the contrary, is a cause absolutely incapable of going out of itself, since it enfolds every possible existence as a part of itself: *Deus est omnium rerum causa immanens, non vero transiens.*<sup>2</sup> Spinoza

<sup>1</sup> [These sentences in reference to ontological speculation remind one of Scaliger's happy saying, "quædam æquo animo nescire velle magna, immo maxima pars sapientiæ est." Aristotle's weighty words need to be remembered, *τούτων δὲ* (sc. ἀποριῶν) *τὰ μὲν ἀνελεῖν δεῖ τὰ δὲ καταλιπεῖν. ἡ γὰρ λύσις τῆς ἀπορίας εὐρεσις ἐστίν.* "There are some problems which we must solve, others which we must just pass by. For their solution would involve a discovery."] (*Ethic: Nicom: vii., ii., 12.*)

<sup>2</sup> *Ethica*, part i., prop. xviii. [The "causa efficiens" is divided into *immanent* and *transitive*. The *transitive* cause produces the effect exter-

used language which was in perfect accordance with his thought, when he substituted for the names of God and the universe, the Creator and the creature, those of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. These terms powerfully express the identity of one and the same existence, decomposed by abstraction, and alternately regarded as substance and mode, infinite and finite, fundamentally undetermined and determined in its necessary forms.

In opposition to this pantheistic solution of the problem of the relations of God with the universe, Leibnitz substituted the idea of God the Creator. In his eyes, the universe exists, with a proper and distinct, though a derivatory existence. It is a harmonious whole, composed of living and substantial units, capable of consciousness and spontaneity. But these units—these monads, or *entelecheias*, as he calls them—being contingent things, form an admirable concert, but one which has nothing necessary about it. They are incapable of finding in themselves the sufficient reason of their being and of their harmony; we must therefore refer them to a principle, which must needs be perfectly living and powerful to have communicated power and life outside itself; per-

nally to itself. The *immanent* cause produces the effect within itself. Of the *transitive* cause there are two conditions, (1) that it should be joined with the effect, (2) that it should be dissimilar to it. When I throw a stone, I am the *transitive* cause of the act. When Mr Tennyson's mind shaped and grasped the conception of his Idylls, it was the *immanent* cause of that conception; Cf. Burgersdyk, *Institutionum Logic.* Lib. i., cap. 17. *De Causá efficiente*. This distinction should be carefully remembered. No pantheistic premiss is more authoritatively quoted in the Hegelian school than this of Spinoza; *Deus rerum omnium causa immanens non vero transiens*." Its thorough refutation is one of the leading features of the present work, as will be seen in the sequel.]

fectly wise to have conceived this universe, and all possible worlds; perfectly good to have freely given the benefit of existence to our contingent universe. This God, the sole and independent principle of the universe, is truly God the creator. "He is," says Leibnitz, "the primitive unit, or simple, original substance, from which all created or derivative monads are produced and born, so to say, by continual *fulgurations* from the Divinity."<sup>1</sup>

God, who is everywhere present, and manifested in the immense universe, is reflected more clearly again in the human consciousness. He possesses all the attributes of personality. His essence excludes only its limitations. "The perfections of God are those of our own souls, but He possesses them without bounds. He is an ocean from whom we have received but a few drops. There is some power, some knowledge, some goodness in us, but they are whole and entire in God. Order, proportions, and harmony enchant us; painting and music are samples of them. God is all order. He always keeps an exquisite justness of proportions. He creates the universal harmony. All beauty is an expansion of His rays."<sup>2</sup>

Leibnitz has now to establish that this principle of God, the Creator, should be substituted for that of Pantheism. According to him, the theory of Spinoza has a radical fault, which is, to have entirely forgotten, not exactly the notion of individual activity in God.

<sup>1</sup> *Principia Philosophia, seu theses in gratiam Principis Eugenii*, Erdmann, p. 708.

<sup>2</sup> *Preface, Essais de Théodicée.*

*activity* (for the God of the *Ethica* is a cause, whose essence is to develop itself necessarily), but the notion of that *individual activity*, having consciousness and possession of itself, of which the human *Ego* is the living type. Individuality, in the system of Spinoza, is not in the *material universe*, since bodies, in his eyes, are only the infinitely diversified aggregate of modalities of extension. It is not in the *spiritual universe*, since souls are only collections of modes without true unity. It is not in *God*, since Spinoza's God is only undetermined substance, having neither understanding, nor consciousness, nor will, nor any of the attributes of moral personality. It follows, that, from top to bottom, Spinozism is only a regular system of abstractions.

For all this Leibnitz substituted realities. The type of reality is the human *Ego*, essentially one and active. Unity and activity united constitute the monad. This is the last term in the analysis of all the components of the universe, and the harmonious total of monads is the universe itself.

Leibnitz  
opposes  
reality to  
Spinoza's  
abstrac-  
tions.

From this point, the problem of God's relation with the universe is entirely changed. Let us see, in fact, how Spinoza put the question: he placed himself in a position perfectly external to facts and observation; and setting to work *à priori*, he conceived on one side substance, pure and undetermined being; on the other, precise determinations, say a particular figure or thought; then he looked for the relation of these terms. But to put the question in this shape is to show that one has solved it by anticipation. For it is clear that substance, thus defined, cannot exist

without modes, and that modes, thus understood, cannot exist but in substance, and relatively to it. But the only result from this, is the one fact, that it has been a philosopher's good pleasure to substitute a pre-conceived system for the true *data* of the question, that is, to feed himself upon his own chimeras. One sole real fact is enough to overthrow this scaffolding. For the system of Spinoza, being an arbitrary hypothesis, could only acquire a little authority, upon condition of explaining all the facts, without exception. But to Spinozism, Leibnitz does not merely oppose one isolated fact; but the witness of consciousness, and the spectacle of all nature, where real and living, rather than nominal unities, actual beings rather than modes or collections of modes—mere vain phantoms of existence—are splendidly manifested. "It is," he says, "by these monads that Spinozism is destroyed. For there are as many true substances, and, so to say, living and subsisting mirrors of the universe or concentrated universes, as there are monads—while, according to Spinoza, there is but one sole substance. He would be quite right, if there were no monads. In that case, all outside God would be evanescent, and dissipated into simple accidents or modifications, since there would not be the basis for substances in things, which consists in the existence of monads."<sup>1</sup>

And, in fact, when a real universe, peopled with real beings, is once admitted, God, who is with us the ultimate reason of all existence, must be conceived as a creative power. For, in truth,

The admission of a real universe leads to the admission of a creative power

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre à M. Bourguet.* Erdmann, p. 720.

the being which God has deposited in each of His works, is not the being of a pure mode, but that of an active and distinct reality. And an infinite activity, the parent of all other activities, is nothing else than a creative activity, which developes itself externally, and which places beyond the precinct of its own existence other existences really distinct from it, since they are themselves rich in a thousand developments. We have no longer to do with the *immanent cause* of Spinoza, locked up, and, as it were, buried in itself, but with a fertile cause, who is the Father of life, and the Creator.

The efficacy of second causes, denied by Malebranche, established by the reality of nature, as stated by Leibnitz.

We must, then, either bid farewell to reality, to inhabit a region of phantoms, with Spinoza, or if we admit that man and nature are more than abstractions, we must further allow creative power in God. The disciples of Malebranche, in the name of the principle of continuous creation, may maintain that there is an incompatibility between the existence of the Supreme Cause, and that of real and efficacious causes beneath it. Let us see how powerfully Leibnitz contends with the singular abuse of this otherwise excellent principle by Malebranche and his followers.

Created things have not merely an extrinsic denomination, but a *lex insita*.

"I ask if this will, or commandment, or Divine law, enforced previously, has given to things nothing but an extrinsic denomination, or if it has deposited in them by creation some durable impression—an *inner law (lex insita)*—unknown perhaps, by most of the creatures in which it is deposited, and from which, nevertheless, their actions and passions follow."

“It is not sufficient, then, to say that God, in creating things, decreed from the beginning that they should observe a certain law in their onward march, if we imagine His will so inefficacious that they have not been durably affected by it. And assuredly, it is opposed to the very notion of the Divine power and will, that God should will, and yet produce and change nothing by His will; that He should be always acting, and never effecting; and that He should finally leave no finished work or result (*ἀποτέλεσμα*). Certainly, if nothing has been deposited in creatures by the Divine word, *Let the earth bring forth—be fruitful and multiply*; if things remained after, as they were before this commandment; as there must be some connexion, mediate or immediate, between the cause and the effect, it follows, that now nothing takes place conformably to the prescription of God, or that His command, efficacious only in the present, must be incessantly renewed in the future. But if, on the contrary, the law enacted by God, has impressed some trace of itself upon things,—if by His command they have been fitted to accomplish the will of Him who ordained them,—then we must grant that things possess in themselves a certain efficacy, form or force, such as I am used to understand by the name of nature, from whence the series of their phenomena follows, according to the prescript of the primitive commandment.”<sup>1</sup>

If they have no such *lex insita*, creation is abortive.

But if we deny, with Malebranche, this efficacy of second causes, we must go on to the end. We must deny both the Divine power and the reality of the universe. We must contradict

<sup>1</sup> *De ipsa Natura*. Dutens, vol. ii., part ii., p. 49.



at once, reason and experience, and, as Leibnitz powerfully says, introduce universal inertia and torpor.

Latent  
Pantheism  
of the  
denial by  
Male-  
branche of  
the *lex*  
*insita*.

“But if any partisan of this new-fangled philosophy, which introduces inertia and torpor, goes so far as to require from the Deity efforts, which are incessantly renewed, thus taking away from the Divine commands all durable effects and efficacy for the future . . . let him see to it how he can reconcile his system with the Divine majesty. He will not be able to extricate himself, unless he can explain the following points : How, when things themselves are able to last for a time, the attributes of these things, or that which we comprehend under the name of *nature*, cannot last equally ? Why, if the Divine *fiat* has left something after it (*i.e.*, the thing itself which subsists), the same not less miraculous word of benediction (*Be fruitful and multiply*) might not just as well leave in things a certain fecundity and power of effort, capable of operating and producing its acts, and whence action can result, unless it be impeded. To which may be added a consideration which I have already explained, and which has not, perhaps, been yet sufficiently penetrated by all, that the very substance of things consists in the power of action and passion ; from which it follows, that nothing durable can be so much as produced, if no permanent power can be impressed upon it by Divine efficacy. Thus it would follow, that no created substance, no soul, can rest numerically the same, that nothing finally is preserved by God, and consequently, that all things may be re-

duced to fugitive and evanescent modifications of one sole permanent Divine substance, and are nothing, if I may so say, but shadows: and (what comes to the same thing) that nature itself is the substance of all things, is God; a detestable doctrine, lately brought in, or resuscitated, by a subtle but profane writer."

Thus one of two results must follow:—

Dilemma  
proposed  
by Leib-  
nitz.

*Either* we must admit a nature, reduced to shadows of existence, and then we must postulate the immanent substance of Spinoza to give them a factitious and abstract unity;

*Or*, we must admit a real nature, and thus believe in God the Creator to explain its existence.

Such is the alternative proposed by Leibnitz. Evidently *experience* is the only arbiter which can decide here; and in assuring us that we are not shadows, she answers our appeal, and proclaims to us the existence of GOD THE CREATOR.

*Experience*  
proves the  
existence of  
the Cre-  
ator.

When Leibnitz is asked to explain the *how* of creation, he answers, as true philosophy should ever answer such questions, by the distinct avowal that the mystery is impenetrable, and by pursuing his researches upon problems, which no doubt are very difficult, but where reason does not expend her efforts in vain.

The law of  
creation in-  
compre-  
hensible.

It is proved that God is the Creator of the universe; that is to say, that God is self-sufficing, and that the universe, which is the work of His will, has nothing *necessary* about it. But if so, why has God, who is thus self-sufficing, gone forth out of Himself? why has He called this contingent universe into existence, rather than any other possible universe?

Why this  
creation  
rather than  
another.

The answer of Leibnitz is that of Plato: "Let

Plato's answer.

us state the cause which has led the Supreme Ordainer to produce and to compose this universe. He was good, and He who is good has no kind of envy. Exempt from envy, He willed that all things should, as far as possible, be like Him. Whoever, instructed by wise men, shall admit this, as the principal reason of the origin and formation of the world, will be right."

So speaks the author of the *Timæus*; and from the principle of the Divine goodness he deduces the consequence that the universe is not only very good, but the best possible. "He who is the Best could not, and cannot, produce anything which is not the fairest. He found that of all visible works nothing without mind could be more beautiful than that which is intelligent, and that in no created being could there be intelligence without soul. Consequently, the Orderer of all lodged intelligence in the soul, and the soul in the body, and so organised the universe that, by its very constitution, it was the most beautiful and perfect work."<sup>1</sup>

Moulded into the theory of "the best possible world" by Leibnitz.

I now close the *Timæus* to open the *Essais de Théodicée*. I find the same spirit and doctrine invested with a preciser form.

"But this supreme wisdom, joined to a no less infinite goodness, could not fail to choose the

<sup>1</sup> [Λέγωμεν δὴ δι' ἣν τινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τότε ὁ ξυμπαῖς, ξυμπόστησεν. ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος· τοῦτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὧν πάντα ὁ τι μάλιστα γενέσθαι ἐβουλήθη παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ· ταύτην δὲ γενέσεως καὶ κόσμου μάλιστα ἂν τις ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην παρ' ἀνδρῶν φρονίμων ἀποδεχόμενος ὀρθότατα ἀποδέχοιτο· ἂν . . . θέμις δὲ οὐτ' ἦν οὐτ' ἐστὶ τῷ ἀρίστῳ δρᾶν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ κάλλιστον· λογιζόμενος δὲν εὕρισκεν ἐκ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ὁρατῶν οὐδὲν ἀνόητον τοῦ νοῦν ἔχοντος ὁλον ὁλου κάλλιον ἐσεσθᾶί ποτ' ἔργον, νοῦν δ' αὖ χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τι. διὰ δὲ τὸν λογισμὸν τόνδε νοῦν μὲν ἐν ψυχῇ, ψυχὴν δὲ ἐν σώματα ξυμπαῖς τὸ πᾶν ξυτεκταίμετο, ὅπως ὁ τι κάλλιστον εἴη κατὰ φύσιν ἀριστὸν τε ἔργον ἀπευφρασμένος.—*Timæus*, 29, 30.]

best. For as a less evil is a sort of good, just so a less good is a sort of evil if it acts as an obstacle to a greater good; and there were somewhat to correct in the actions of God, if there were the means of doing better. And as in mathematics, so in the matter of perfect wisdom, which is no less exactly ruled than mathematics, if there were not the best (*optimum*) among all possible worlds, God would not have produced any. By the *world* I mean the whole series and collection of all existing things; so that it cannot be said that several worlds might exist in different times and different places. For it would be necessary, according to my definition, to count them altogether as one world, or one universe, if you prefer the term. And when all times and places are filled up, it remains invariably true that they could have been filled up in an infinity of manners, and that there is an infinity of possible worlds, of which God must have chosen the best, since He does nothing without acting according to the highest reason."<sup>1</sup>

This is the *optimism* of Leibnitz in its fundamental principles. So far, there is nothing to distinguish it from the theory which Malebranche had also drawn from the Platonic tradition. But here the points of difference begin. Malebranche and Leibnitz have both come face to face with the following thorny question. How can this universe, which even on the supposition that it is the best possible is necessarily imperfect, have been esteemed worthy of existence by an all-perfect and self-sufficing Being? Malebranche, who

How was this world thought worthy of existence? For the questionable theory of Malebranche, Leibnitz substitutes that of the infinity (in a certain sense) of the universe.

<sup>1</sup> *Essai de Théodicée*, Part I. 8.

would not admit a universe infinite in extension and duration, lest such a universe should not sufficiently bear the mark of its dependence, and lest an eternal work might seem able to dispense with a worker; and who, on the other hand, was persuaded that the infinity of the Creator should be manifested in His creatures—was beguiled into a most extraordinary idea. He maintained that the incarnation of God in humanity was necessary to give this universe a value which rendered it preferable to every other, and worthy of the election of God.

So precarious a system could not suit Leibnitz. It is not in his eyes the course of a true philosopher to bring in the intervention of theological dogmas in a metaphysical problem, and to attempt the illumination of difficulties presented to the speculative reason in one of the most impenetrable mysteries of the Christian religion. And the theology to which Malebranche has recourse is of a peculiar character, suspected by Bossuet, opposed by Arnould, and consequently destitute of correctness, the only advantage which it could possess, in reference to the subject on which it was employed.

Leibnitz disentangled the optimism of Malebranche from this unfortunate complication, and facing the question boldly, declared that an infinite universe alone could worthily manifest the Being, whose essence is infinite perfection. The only question is to come to an understanding upon this infinity of the universe.

In what  
sense the  
universe is

The universe may be infinite, without being the Infinite, that is to say the Perfect and Absolute

Being, who is necessarily *per se*, and who is God. <sup>infinite, according to Leibniz.</sup> The infinity of the universe cannot, therefore, be an absolute infinity. It can only be a relative infinity, an infinity of number, duration, and the like. The notion of the Infinite is peculiarly rich and complicated. Leibnitz, who has meditated upon it perhaps more than any other man, remarks that there are infinities of all sorts, that one infinite can be greater in a determined greatness than another infinite, or again, that there are infinities infinitely greater or infinitely smaller than others.<sup>1</sup>

These principles being laid down, Leibnitz maintains that the universe is infinite in several manners.

“It may be said that it is impossible to produce the best, because there is no perfect creature, and it is always possible to produce one who shall be more so. I answer that what may be said of one particular creature or substance, which can always be surpassed by another, ought not to be applied to the universe, which as stretching through all the future eternity, is an infinite. Moreover, there is an infinity of creatures in the least parcel of matter, by reason of the actual division which can be carried on *ad infinitum*. And the infinite, *i.e.*, the aggregate of an infinite number of substances, is not properly speaking a whole, any more than infinite number itself, of which no man

<sup>1</sup> [In one of his letters to Bourguet, which possess such especial value, Leibnitz cites the following example—“The sum of this series  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16}$  etc. *ad infinitum*, is infinite and surpasses any assignable number; but yet the sum of this other series  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8}$  etc. *ad infinitum*, is infinitely greater than the preceding.”—*Erdmann's Edition*, p. 74.—[It will be remembered that Descartes held the infinity of the universe, but when pressed with theological objections answered by a distinction between *infinite* and *indefinite*, reserving the former for God alone].

can say whether it be odd or even. This serves to refute those who make a God of the world, or who conceive God as an *anima mundi*, since the world or the universe cannot be considered as an animal or a substance."<sup>1</sup>

Leibnitz holds that all in nature tends to infinity.

It is one of the most cherished principles of Leibnitz, that everything in nature tends to infinity. He incessantly returns to this thought with an inexhaustible fertility of new applications, and of original analogies and conjectures.

"Each organic body of a living creature is a species of Divine machine, or ~~natural~~ automaton, which infinitely surpasses artificial automatons, because a machine made by man's art is not a machine in each of its parts. For instance the tooth of a brass wheel has parts or fragments which are no longer anything artificial. . . . But the machines of nature, that is living bodies, are machines in their minutest portions *ad infinitum*. This constitutes the difference between art and nature, that is to say, between the Divine art and our own.<sup>2</sup> And the author of nature has been able to practise this Divine and infinitely marvellous workmanship, because each portion of matter

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, Part II., p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> [Bacon has stated another distinction between art and nature, beautiful in itself, more beautiful as an illustration of the difference between the morality of mere habit which is natural, and the morality of right ends, which is the morality of Christian charity—"Statuarius, quando simulacrum aliquod sculpsit aut incidit, illius solummodo partis figuram effingit, circa quam manus occupata est . . . e contra vero natura, quando florem molitur aut animal, rudimenta partium omnium simul parit et producit.—*De Augmentis*, lib. VII. c. III. cf. "Natura valet in eodem tempore, in eodem subjecto multas partes, non solum diversas, sed etiam contrarias, tum congregare tum perficere, atque etiam conservare . . . quasi vero una sit Natura, cujus liberalitate atque opulentiâ materia suppeditetur; altera, cujus prudentiâ atque sedulitate alatur opus, atque provehatur ad finem suam! Ac non una eademque quæ evocet, distribuât, etc."—Jul. C. Scaliger *De Subtil*, CLVII. 3, 4.]

is not only divisible *ad infinitum*, as the ancients owned, but yet, further, actually sub-divided without end, each portion into parts of which every one has its own movement; otherwise, it would be impossible that each fraction of matter could express the universe."

"Hence we see that there is a world of crea-  
tures, living things, animals, *entelechias*, souls, in the least portion of matter. Each parcel of it may be conceived as a garden full of plants and as a pond full of fishes. But each sprig of the plant, each member of the animal, each drop of its humours is once more such a garden and such a pond. And though the soil and the air, intercepted between the plants of the garden, and the water intercepted between the fishes of the pond, be neither plant nor fish, yet they contain them again, though most frequently so minute as to be imperceptible to us. Thus there is nothing dead or barren in the universe."<sup>1</sup>

The universe, according to Leibnitz, is infinite in two senses, first, by the infinite number of forces which compose it, then by the infinite duration of its development to come. But an unlimited future does not constitute a truly infinite duration. There are two eternities, says Leibnitz, with his favourite schoolmen, one on the side of the past, *à parte ante*, the other on the side of the future, *à parte post*. In other words, Leibnitz here encounters one of the most delicate questions in metaphysics, to wit, whether the world is eternal, or whether it has had a beginning.

<sup>1</sup> *Principia Philosophiæ*, Erdmann, p. 717—comp. *Principes de la Nature et de la grace*, 1, 2, 3, seq. *Ibid.* p. 714.



Leibnitz has never, I think, displayed a higher sagacity. This bold and strong intellect recoils before the terrible difficulties with which the problem of the eternity of the world bristles. He applies to it his subtlest and profoundest analysis. He discovers and discusses all the alternatives, finding mathematical symbols to express them which are as clear as they are ingenious. But in spite of all this, whether by bringing out the prodigious difficulty of the problem, or in asking more time, because, as he says, he has not yet reflected upon it enough (and note that he had been reflecting upon it all his life, since he writes thus in 1715), he refrains from coming to a definite conclusion, not however without leaving it to be gathered that he inclines to the theory of a universe, without beginning or end—the eternal manifestation of an eternal God. It is certainly worth while to stop for a few moments, and to gaze upon the perplexities of this gigantic genius, as he wrestles with one of the profoundest mysteries of the *Theodicea*.

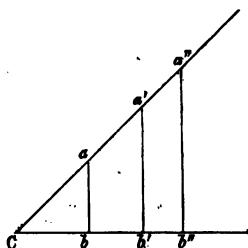
Leibnitz, with much hesitation, inclines to think the universe in a certain sense eternal.

A correspondent of Leibnitz, who was a partisan of the system which gives a beginning to the universe, rests upon the argument, that we must, in point of duration, rest upon a first fundamental instant, as, in point of numbers, we must end with the unit. Leibnitz, after having shown the weakness of this proof, continues in language,<sup>1</sup> in which, if I understand him aright, he distinguishes three possible solutions of the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres à Bourguet*. Erdmann, p. 733. See also another letter to Bourguet, where Leibnitz expresses himself thus: "I should like to know how it can be demonstrated that every succession necessarily implies a commencement," p. 720. [I have omitted a few sentences from this letter of Leibnitz, as sufficiently explained by M. Saisset's commentary.]

problem of the origin of the world, as to duration.

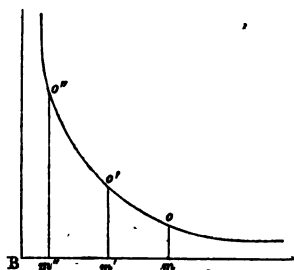
1. The most familiar to the imagination has a triangle C for its symbol. Thus—



Three possible solutions, expressed by mathematical symbols.  
1. A triangle.

Let us suppose a beginning to the world. It starts from the point C, and developing itself with unceasing regularity, it is represented from age to age by the increasing triangles, C,  $a, b$ , C,  $a', b'$ ; C,  $a'', b''$ .

2. A second solution has for its symbol a Hyperbole, B.

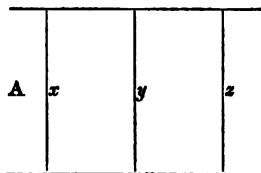


Conceive the points  $o, o', o'', o'''$ , as representing successive states of the universe. On this hypothesis, as it is plain that each of the branches of the curve will not meet its asymptote again but in infinity, it follows that the universe,

at any given moment, has behind it a limitless past, and before it an endless future, and growing towards perfection. One point, common to these two solutions, is the indefinite perfectibility of the universe, rendered sensible by the increase of the angles  $C, a, b$ ;  $C, a', b'$ ;  $C, a'', b''$ , and of the ordinates  $m, o, m', o', m'', o''$ .

3. A rectangle.

3. The last hypothesis is that of a stationary, though perpetually changing universe. It is noted by a rectangle, A. The lines  $x, y, z$  represent the successive states of the world, which incessantly advances in time, and varies in forms, but always preserves an equal sum of perfection.



This third system, according to Leibnitz, excludes the supposition of the absolute commencement of the universe, and implies its eternity.

Of these three alternatives, no one is expressly adopted by Leibnitz. Whether from prudence, or sincere hesitation, when pressed by Bourguet, he answers: "I do not yet see any means of making it demonstratively evident which is preferable on grounds of pure reason."<sup>1</sup>

Leibnitz inclines to 2 and 3, as most in accordance with his philosophy.

When further urged, Leibnitz allows his preference to be guessed, for one or other of the two last hypotheses, that is to say, in either case, for a universe without beginning or end. In

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres à Bourguet*, p. 733. Erdmann. Of., p. 743.

fact, this system is in accordance with his principle, that all in nature tends to infinity; it further agrees with his views upon the nature of time and of eternity, two notions, which are perfectly distinct, and which the Newtonians, in his eyes, were guilty of the serious error of confounding.

"It is quite true," he writes to Bourguet, "that the notion of eternity in God is quite different from that of time, for *it* consists in necessity, and that of time in contingency. But it does not follow (if no other way of answering can be found) that contingency has a beginning."

In fact, Leibnitz (like Plato before him) powerfully distinguishes the immoveable eternity, which belongs to God alone, from its moveable image, time, which is the attribute of finite things.<sup>1</sup> Granting that the duration of the universe no more had a commencement than it will have an end, it would not follow, strictly speaking, that the universe was eternal as God.<sup>2</sup> God does not endure. He is—and this is eternity. The universe changes incessantly, aspiring, so to say, after absolute existence, without ever attaining it, and this is time.

An eternal universe not necessarily eternal as God.

<sup>1</sup> [The passage referred to is this, *ἡ μὲν οὖν τοῦ ζῶοντος φύσις ἐτύγγαζεν οὐσα αἰώνιος. καὶ τοῦτο, μὲν δὴ τῷ γεννητῷ παντελῶς προσάπτειν οὐκ ἔστι δυνατόν, εἰκὼ δ' ἐπινοεῖ κινήτων τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν λοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον δὲ δὴ χρόνον ὠνομακαμεν.* "Its nature, therefore, was eternal. And it was impossible to fit this eternity to that which was generated. Wherefore He resolves to make a certain moveable image of eternity, and while ordering the heaven, creates an eternal image, moving numerically, of the eternity which abides in unity, which [image] we call time."—*Timæus*, c. xxxviii.]

<sup>2</sup> [So St. Augustine says of the angels. "Nec si semper fuerunt, ideo Creatori co-æterni sunt."]

We must interpret, in this sense, the following rather enigmatical passages of Leibnitz: "As for the hypothesis of the Hyperbole, neither does it follow that that which has no beginning is necessarily existent; for it might always have been voluntarily produced by the Sovereign Being."<sup>1</sup>

And in another letter to Bourguet: "Even supposing the rectangle to be true, there would be no productions of wisdom co-eternal with her. For her productions always change. A necessary production cannot be subject to change."<sup>2</sup>

The more I meditate upon these passages, the more evident it is to me that Leibnitz inclines to a world infinite in duration, as well as in the number and variety of its beings. But, like a true philosopher, he is resolved to affirm nothing which he is not in a position to demonstrate, and consequently, refuses to decide. He avoids a conclusive answer, and gives his over-curious correspondent a lesson in philosophical discretion.

"I beg you, Sir, to reflect how you can reduce your reasonings above to a proper form; for I do not yet see the means. Without that, there will always be remarks and replies to make, without

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres à Bourguet*, p. 734. Erdmann.

<sup>2</sup> It is possibly in the same sense, that St. Augustine, agitating the problem of the origin of the world, and not less struck than Leibnitz with the difficulty of choosing between the contrary alternatives, expresses himself thus in a chapter, where he, too, seems to incline to a world of an infinite duration. "God always had His creatures obeying His dominion. He was before His creation, though at no time without it, as preceding it not by a shifting interval of time, but by a fixed and abiding perpetuity." [*Quapropter si Deus semper dominus fuit, semper habuit creaturam suo dominatui servientem . . . erat quippe ante illam, quamvis nullo tempore sine illâ; non eam spatio transcurrente, sed manente perpetuitate præcedens.*—*De Civit. Dei*, Lib. xii., c. xv.]

one's being able to know if one has really advanced or not."<sup>1</sup>

These views upon the universe, conceived as infinite in all kinds of infinity compatible with its imperfect nature, complete the Leibnitian system of optimism. But it still remains to resolve the difficulties which rise upon all quarters. These are of *three* kinds—

Some are drawn from the *Divine* liberty.

Others from *human* liberty.

Others, again, from the *existence of evil*.

1. Let us see the substance of the first objection.

If God, as is affirmed, has created the world from His goodness, it follows that He could not help creating it, for He cannot but be good. Further, if goodness and wisdom—those necessary attributes of God—have determined Him, not only to create, but to create the best universe, we must conclude that all other universes were practically impossible, and consequently, that the created universe is the necessary product of a God without liberty.

Leibnitz resolves this difficulty by the distinction, at once clear and profound, between two kinds of necessity. There is *mathematical* necessity, which is immediate and absolute, excluding all possibility of the contrary, and consequently, all choice and all liberty. There is, again, *moral* necessity, which is conditional and relative, and which, admitting, and even implying, the possibility of the contrary, admits and implies choice and liberty. Undoubtedly, God can do no evil;

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres à Bourguet*. Erdmann. P. 743.

and, in this sense, He is not free after the fashion of men. All that He does is necessary, being necessarily the best. But such a necessity, purely moral as it is, and founded upon reason and goodness, is reconciled, in the all-perfect Being, with the purest liberty, and constitutes the ideal of the all-wise, or of the Holy of holies, the perfect model to which our imperfect liberty should always tend, without ever touching it.

True liberty, according to Leibnitz.

He says, "The true and most perfect liberty is to be able to use free-will best, and to exercise that power without being turned away, either by external force or by inward passions, of which the former constitutes the slavery of the body, while the latter constitute the slavery of the soul. There is nothing less servile than to be always led to good, and that by one's own inclination, without constraint and without displeasure.<sup>1</sup> And it is a mere sophism to object that God had need of external things. He created them freely; but having proposed to Himself an end, which is to exercise His goodness, wisdom determined Him to choose the means which were most appropriate to obtain that end. To call this *need* is to take the term in an unusual sense, which purifies it from all imperfection, almost as we do when we speak of the wrath of God.

"Seneca somewhere says that God has com-

<sup>1</sup> ["A common mistake, which learned men have been guilty of, confounding this faculty of *free-will* with *liberty* as it is in a state of pure perfection. For what is more common than in writings both ancient and modern, to find men creaking and boasting of the ἐξουσία τῶν ἀντικειμένων, the liberty of contrariety,—i. e., to good or evil—as if this was really a liberty of perfection, to be in an indifferent equilibrium state to do good or evil moral."—Cudworth, *Treatise of Free-will*, p. 63.]

manded but once, but that He always obeys, because He obeys the laws which He Himself has willed to prescribe—*Semel jussit, semper paret*. But he might much better have said that God always commands, and is always obeyed; for, in willing, He always follows the bent of His own nature, and all things always follow His will. And as this will is ever the same, it is not correct to say that He only obeys that will which He formerly had. Still, though His will is always unfailing, and always tends to that which is best, the evil, or the lesser good, which He rejects, does not fail to be possible in itself; otherwise the necessity of good would be geometrical (so to say) or metaphysical, and perfectly absolute; the contingency of things would be nullified, and there would be no choice. But this kind of necessity, which does not destroy the possibility of its contrary, has only its name by analogy. It becomes effective, not by the mere essence of things, but by that which is outside and above them, namely by the will of God. This necessity is called *moral*, because, with the wise, *necessary* and *right* are equivalent things; and when it always has its effect, as it truly has, in the perfectly wise One who is God, we may say that it is a blessed necessity. The more creatures approach to this, the nearer they come to perfect felicity. Thus, this kind of necessity is not that which we seek to avoid, and which annihilates morality, recompense, and desert; for what it involves does not happen do and will as we may, but because we will it well. And a will to which it is natural to choose well deserves to be praised

Moral or  
analogous  
sense of  
necessity.



the more;<sup>1</sup> and it carries its recompense with it, which is supreme blessedness. And as this constitution of the Divine nature gives an infinite satisfaction to Him who possesses it, it is also the best and most desirable for creatures who depend altogether upon God. If the will of God had not as its rule this principle of the best, it would tend to evil, or it would be in some sort indifferent to good and evil, and guided by chance. But a will which gave itself up to chance would scarcely be better for the government of the universe than the fortuitous concurrence of corpuscles, without any Divinity. And let us even suppose that God abandoned Himself to chance, only in some cases and in some sort, as He would do if He did not always move on to the best, and if He were capable of preferring a less to a greater good—that is to say, an evil to a good—since that which hinders a greater good is an evil. In this case He would be imperfect, as well as the object of His choice. He would not win our entire confidence. He would act in such a case without reason, and the government of the universe would be like a game between reason and fortune. And

<sup>1</sup> [As the Bishop of Killaloe observes, “The Greek language marks very happily the distinction between the kind of approbation which we give to excellence which is not the consequence of an act of the will choosing the right under the pressure of motives to the contrary, and that which we give to the virtue of beings in a state of trial.” Aristotle states in the *Rhetoric* that *praise* and *virtue* are correlative (I. v. 17). Δῆλον, he says again, ὅτι τῶν ἀρίστων, οὐκ ἔστιν ἔπαινος ἀλλὰ μείζον τι καὶ βέλτιον . . . τοὺς τε γὰρ θεοὺς μακαρίζομεν.—(*Ethic. Nicom.* I. 12.) See Fitzgerald’s *Butler’s Analogy*, p. 78. Even in human virtue, Bacon praises the ancients “in discrimination virtutis cum reluctatione, et virtutis jam securitatem nactæ et confirmatæ.”—*De Augmentis Scient.*, lib. vii. c. i.]

all this lets us see that the objection which is made against the choice of the best perverts the notions of freedom and of necessity, and even represents the best itself as bad; which is either wicked or ridiculous."<sup>1</sup>

The opponents of optimism, wishing to establish that God acts with choice and intelligence, but to remove at any cost the choice of the best, object that there is *no best*, and that we must represent the possible universe as a chain without beginning or end, each link of which represents a sum of limited perfections, having above it a greater sum, all infinitely far from perfection, and on this score equally incapable of expressing it, but all, too, infinitely removed from nothing, and on this score equally worthy of the choice of God.<sup>2</sup>

Leibnitz appears to me to succeed both in destroying this theory and in defending his own. He sets himself to prove, in the first place, that it does not follow, from the fact of all the universe being one creation, that we should conceive it as a finite thing. A universe, indeed, is not an individual, but an infinite total of beings, destined to an unlimited development.<sup>3</sup> "But," it will be said, "an infinite universe must contain all possible worlds, as an infinite series contains all numbers." "I cannot grant it," answers Leibnitz; "the series of square numbers is infinite, and yet it does not comprise all possible numbers."<sup>4</sup> The point is further pressed. It is

Theory of infinite chain of possible universes, in opposition to optimism.

Objections—especially that on the fact of the Leibnizian theory the (so-called) *best possible* universe is really the *only possible* one.

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Théodicée, abrégé de la controverse, &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Fénelon—*Refutation du Système du Père Malebranche.*

<sup>3</sup> *Essais de Théodicée.* Part II. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *Lettres à Bourguet*, p. 719.

urged: "Admit, that in all possible worlds united we shall have a total universe greater than any of its component universes, and beyond this universe there would be no other—it would not be *the best*, it would be *the only one*."

Answered  
by the  
distinction  
between  
"possibles"  
and "com-  
possibles."

To these subtle arguments Leibnitz opposes a new and very ingenious distinction, that between "possibles," absolutely speaking, and "*compossibles*." We can, indeed, easily conceive beings in themselves excellent and possible, but which are excluded. For instance, a universe, where every good action would be immediately rewarded, and every bad action punished, is possible in itself; but it is not compatible with a universe where virtue is submitted to the law of probation. These two universes are possible; but, as Leibnitz says, they are not compossible. Therefore, the hypothesis of the junction of all possible universes in one is absurd.

Finally, says Leibnitz, passing from the defensive to the attack, "Were this opinion of an infinite chain of possible universes true, it would follow that God had never produced any, for He is incapable of acting without reason, and this would be even to act against reason. It is just as if we were to imagine that God had determined to make a material sphere, without there being any reason for making it of such a size. This purpose would be useless; it would have in it that which would hinder the effect. It would be another thing if God determined to draw from a given point a right line to another given right line, without there being any determination of the angle, either in the degree or in its circum-

stances. For, in this case, the determination would come from the nature of the thing, the line would be perpendicular, and the angle a right angle, since that is the only thing which is determined. . . . Thus must we conceive the creation of the best of all possible universes, and so much the more as God not only decrees to create a universe, but the best of all; for He does not decree without knowledge, and He makes no detached decrees."<sup>1</sup>

2. From the divine, Leibnitz passes to the human liberty, and on this new battle-field of controversy he appears less happy in elucidating difficulties. Here is the chief objection put to him by Bayle.

2. Second objection, drawn from human liberty, by Bayle.

You assert that God has chosen the universe, which actually exists, as the best among all possible worlds; that is to say, as that which includes the largest sum of good combined with the smallest sum of evil. This implies that He has infallibly foreseen and sovereignly ordained all in view of this end, and if all, then emphatically the actions of men, like everything else. These actions, then, are predetermined, and therefore necessary; consequently, they are not free.

Leibnitz only answers by appealing to his distinction between two sorts of necessity—the one immediate and absolute, the other relative, conditional, and purely moral. I admit, he says, that the actions of men, being included in the plan of "the best," are predetermined, and upon this ground morally necessary; but, considered in themselves, they are contingent and dependent upon the free will of men. True, God foresees

Leibnitz answers by his previous distinction between absolute and relative necessity.

<sup>1</sup> *Essai de Théodicée*. Part II. 196.

them, with all their consequences, but He foresees them in their cause. Remove this cause—remove man's free-will, and the motives which incline it—and the Divine prevision has no longer any foundation:—

“Thus the predetermination of events by causes is just that which contributes to morality instead of destroying it, and causes incline the will without necessitating it. This is why the determination here spoken of is not a necessitation. To Him who knows all, it is certain that the effect will follow this inclination. But this effect does not follow by a necessary consequence, that is to say, one the contrary of which implies a contradiction; and it is by such an internal inclination that the will is determined, without there being necessity.”<sup>1</sup>

Unsatisfactory character of the answer of Leibnitz, arising from his theory that the final action is, in all cases, the result of the sum of inclinations.

I should not understand, I confess, how Leibnitz could possibly have contented himself with this answer, if I did not remember his peculiar views upon human liberty. In the midst of his meditations upon this problem, and among all the controversies in which he was engaged, his great object and constant purpose was to wage war against the system of the liberty of indifference. To admit a liberty which acts without motives was, in his eyes, to surrender both the human and the Divine will to chance. It was to attack the great principle of the sufficient reason, the foundation of metaphysics. Leibnitz battles vigorously with the partisans of indifference; but upon this slippery soil of the problem of liberty, he falls against a stumbling-block from

<sup>1</sup> *Essai de Théodicée*. Abrégé de la controverse. Erdmann, p. 626.

which, I think, even the largest genius cannot preserve human weakness. To avoid one extreme, he flings himself into the contrary extreme. He is not satisfied with maintaining that every free action implies motives, and that every motive exercises a moral influence upon the will. He asserts that motives actually determine the will, so that the final action is only the result of the sum of inclinations. According to him, every one of the almost innumerable motives which are, every instant, soliciting the human will, answers to a good which has some attraction for it. But, as these motives are opposite, and lead us towards different goods, a struggle takes place, and from hence arise the irresolutions and inner combats of the will; but, after a longer or shorter indecision, the conflict ceases, and the will is always determined by that which seems to it the greater good.

Such is the precarious theory which Leibnitz constantly opposes to Locke, who had supported the contrary theory with great power of judgment and of observation.<sup>1</sup> In vain is he opposed by

<sup>1</sup> ["*The greatest positive good determines not the will but uneasiness. . . . It seems so established a maxim that the greater good determines the will, that I do not at all wonder that when I first published my thoughts on this subject, I took it for granted. But yet, upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire, raised proportionally to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it.*" Locke adduces the instances of a man, convinced that plenty is better than penury, yet whose will does not determine him to any action towards bettering his position; and of a man, persuaded of the excellence of righteousness, yet whose will does not lead him to any course of right action, until he feels an uneasiness in the want of holiness. He also points to the drunkard, persuaded of the results of his indulgences, but driven "by uneasiness to miss his accustomed delight." "And thus he is, from time to time, in the state of that unhappy complainer, *video meliora proboque.*" Locke gives the *rationale*, of this—

common sense, and by those lines of the ingenious poet who has made himself its interpreter :—

“Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor.”

Leibnitz, however, does not yield,<sup>1</sup> and confounding under the name of Good two things which are radically distinct—natural and moral good—maintains his doctrine, and confines himself to dismissing Locke and common sense, politely enough.

“There is,” he says to his interlocutor, “something fine and solid in these considerations. Still, I should not like it to be believed that we must give up the old axiom,<sup>2</sup> that the will follows the greatest good.”

Leibnitz  
resists the  
testimony  
of con-  
sciousness  
to the in-  
dependence  
of our  
actions.

Once impelled down this descent, Leibnitz does not stop. After having repelled common sense, he goes so far as to dispute the testimony of consciousness. “There is no force,” he says, “in the reason alleged by Descartes, to prove the independence of our free actions by a pretended lively internal sentiment. We cannot, properly speaking, feel our own independence, and we do not always perceive the often imperceptible causes on which our resolution depends. It is as if the needle should take pleasure in turning to the North; for it would suppose that it turned independently of any other cause, not perceiving the insensible motions of the magnetic matter.”<sup>3</sup>

Leibnitz delights in insisting upon the secret

because the removal of uneasiness is the first step to happiness, because uneasiness alone is present, because all who allow the joys of heaven possible, pursue them not, but any great uneasiness is never neglected. Desire accompanies all uneasiness, and the most pressing uneasiness naturally determines the will.—*Essay*, Book II., ch. XXI., 29-40.]

<sup>1</sup> *Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement Humain*, Lib. II., c. XXI.

<sup>2</sup> *Nouveaux Essais*, I., 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Essais de Theodicee*, Part I., 50.

influence of confused inclinations, most frequently unknown to the soul which allows itself to be led by them. He ingeniously compares them to the thousand undistinguishable sounds made by the least surges on the sea-shore, each of which does not fail to take up its own part in producing the majestic sound of the ocean.<sup>1</sup>

Illustration of the influence of confused inclinations upon the will.

Leibnitz also displays a rare fineness of analysis, when, to explain the little real effect produced upon our voluntary determinations by the great objects of reason—God, virtue, happiness,—he describes those thoughts which he calls *deaf* (or blind), that is, void of perception and sentiment, which are like algebraical symbols and cannot touch us, because we want something living to produce emotion.<sup>2</sup> All this is touched with a

*Cogitationes cæcæ.*

<sup>1</sup> *Principes de la Nature et de la grace*, 8.

<sup>2</sup> [*Nouveaux Essais*, I. iv. II., c. XXI. (Cf., “Plerumque, præsertim in analysi longiore, non totam simul naturam rei intuemur, sed rerum loco signis utimur, quorum explicationem in præsentī aliquā cogitatione compendii causā solemus prætermittēre, scientes aut credentes nos eam habere in potestate . . . qualem cogitationem cæcam, vel etiam symbolicam appellare soleo, quā et in Algebrā, et in Arithmetica utimur, imò ferē ubique.”)—*Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate, et Ideis*. This observation, carried further in a different direction, leads to some of the most important laws connected with the use of language. In complex words we do not contemplate the whole, or even a large portion of their meaning. We use them as letters in Algebra or figures in Arithmetic; they are, as Leibnitz says, *cogitationes cæcæ* or *symbolicæ*. Hence terms lose a portion of their meaning in different generations. The remedy to this perpetual waste of meaning (as Mr. Mill profoundly remarks) is with some men a *lively imagination*, with others *predication*. That things appear larger, and are more affecting, when they are articulated into their parts, is one of the most obvious principles of rhetoric and poetry (διαρρούμενα δὲ εἰς τὰ μέρη τὰ αὐτὰ μείζω φάλγεται κ. τ. λ., *Arist. Rhetor.*, I., c. VII., 31.) In the case of predication, the predicates are sometimes as *cæcæ* as the subject of which they are predicated. Hence mechanically held propositions, traditionary maxims, lifeless dogmas. A particular portion of the thought contained in a complex term, fades and becomes pale at certain times, and if the term be very complex, perhaps to generations. But as long as the *formula* survives, it is only faint, not obliterated. It is like a palimpsest, under



Danger of  
denying  
this fact  
of con-  
sciousness.

spirit of subtle and delicate observation, and may be true of a thousand actions which are done from circumstances, by habit, in a word, without reflection.<sup>1</sup> But if you go so far as to assert that, in the cool recollection of serious deliberation I have no right to trust unreservedly to the witness of the inward sense; that while I feel myself free, *certissimâ scientiâ et clamante conscientiâ*, it is possible that I am fatally led on by circumstances, I say that you give a shock to all certainty. I say that you come back to the paradox of Malebranche, so often opposed by you, that we have nothing from the soul but a confused perception, and that we must believe nothing but pure ideas. I say that you teach to the same effect as Spinoza, with whom free-will is a deceptive sentiment, a natural prejudice of the imagination, which vanishes before the pure reason.

The hypo-  
thesis of the  
"pre-es-  
tablished har-  
mony" is  
the weak  
point in the  
Leibnitzian  
system.

How are we to account for such an extreme position in so eminent a philosopher? I believe that the explanation is to be found in his hypothesis of the pre-established harmony, a lagging and unfortunate conception, which, far from being

whose legible lines there is concealed an actually illegible, but potentially legible, reading. It would be a strange way of correcting the palimpsest to burn it, or throw it into the fire. The hidden reading only waits the touch of certain chemical ingredients. Just so, while the formula remains, the meaning may be re-read at any time, given the necessary moral and intellectual conditions. Hence "the oscillation in spiritual truths," whose meaning is almost always in process of being lost or recovered. These laws of language contain, I think, an apology for the use of creeds and formularies; and they throw a flood of light upon the history of theological movements. The chapter in Mr. Mill's *Logic*, from which much of this note is taken, is a profound commentary (apparently unintentionally) upon the *cæcæ cogitationes* of Leibnitz.—*Mill's Logic*, Book IV., chapter iv. "Evil consequences of casting off any portion of the customary connotation of words," pp. 259-268.]

<sup>1</sup> [This class of actions has been called *semi-voluntary*.]

a natural development of the theory of monads, is rather, I think, an illogical prolongation of it.

While Leibnitz was only occupied with dis-<sup>Leibnitz did not originally conceive the monad as solitary.</sup>covering the weak side of the metaphysics of Descartes, and fixing accurately the notion of substance, he remained faithful to the solid and pregnant principle that activity is the essence of every being. Hence his conception of the universe as a system of forces, graduated according to their perfection. At this crisis of his philosophical development, Leibnitz was very far from considering the monad as a solitary existence, drawing all from itself, and incapable of acting externally to itself. Nothing indeed can be less natural than such an idea; nothing less in analogy with this visible world; nothing, above all, more contrary to the testimony of consciousness, which makes us feel our own force in conflict with the powers which limit it, alternately or at once active and passive, modifying the medium in which it is developed, and modified by it.

I apprehend that Leibnitz was led to overlook <sup>The union of the soul with the body was the difficulty which led him to this position.</sup>so many striking facts, by the difficulties inherent in the union of the soul and body, and generally in the mode of intercommunication between substances. After having related how he arrived at the idea of monadology, he observes, "I believed that I was now in port, but when I set myself to meditate upon the union of the soul with the body, I was at sea again."<sup>1</sup>

The impossibility then of understanding the action of one force upon another force is the diffi-

<sup>1</sup> *Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances*, in the collection of Desmaizeaux, tom. 1.

culty of Leibnitz. Thus he was led to conceive (first, as a captivating hypothesis; then as a necessary result of the nature of things) a system of forces developing themselves in a solitary way—"having no windows outwards," as he says, with his own expressive familiarity<sup>1</sup>—acting each on its own account, and yet all acting together with perfect harmony, because they have been constructed for one another by an Almighty Geometer, who incessantly puts and resolves the following problem, "Given the actual state of a monad, to deduce from it the past, present, and future state of all the monads in the universe."

This theory of the isolation of monads culminates in the position that the human soul is a sort of spiritual automaton.

In this system every being is developed—to use the language of Leibnitz<sup>2</sup>—as a mathematical curve, in which the points of inflexion and repulsion are calculated before, and result from its definition. From whence it follows that all beings are really machines, and that the only difference which separates them is that they feel more or less the spontaneous and fatal force which is in them. None of them, however, has consciousness perfectly; this is the privilege of God alone. Leibnitz boldly accepts this conclusion, and that there may be no mistake he says in so many words: "All in man, as everywhere else in the universe, is certain and pre-determined, and the human soul is a kind of *spiritual automaton*."<sup>3</sup>

Refutation of Leibnitz on free-will.

I can no longer be surprised that the polemic of Leibnitz against Bayle is weak on the point of free-will. The distinction between absolute and

<sup>1</sup> *Principes de la nature et de la grâce*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettre à Basnage*, Erdmann, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> *Essais de Theodicée*, part ii., 52.

moral necessity, applied to the will of God, is as satisfactory, as it is frivolous when transferred to man. There is nothing disquieting in the moral necessity of the Divine acts, since, in Him who is all-wise and all-good, liberty must be conceived as pure from all the imperfections of our free-will, and compatible with absolute impeccability; but, in man, this moral necessity is denied by the inward consciousness, and elsewhere Leibnitz does not hold to it himself. For to maintain, as he does, that the inclinations determine the will; to abuse the principle of the sufficient reason so far as to assert that the actual state of a soul is a result of its anterior state; to refuse the testimony of consciousness on the plea that we are ignorant of all which passes within us; to compare the soul to a magnetic needle, nay to call it roundly a *spiritual automaton*, may be described as follows: It is to add an ill-concealed physical to an admitted moral necessity. It is to substitute the artificial combinations of a system for the nature of things, as displayed to us by experience. It is, in short, to give the rein to that spirit of abstract and geometrical speculation, the evil genius of modern philosophy, which has unduly influenced Descartes and utterly misled Spinoza.

3. Leibnitz regains his advantage over Bayle in the last part of the discussion, upon the origin of evil. The bold and ingenious mind of Malebranche had already opened the way to optimism. But he had not grasped the problem of evil in its full extent, and to resolve it he had availed himself exclusively and excessively of the necessary simplicity of the Divine ways. Leibnitz has two

3. Third objection to the Leibnizian theory of an infinite world, from the existence of evil.

great advantages over his predecessors: he exhausts all form of evils, and explains them upon more extensive principles.

Three categories of evil.

"We may," he says, "take evil *metaphysically*, *physically*, and *morally*. Metaphysical evil consists in simple *imperfection*, physical evil in *suffering*, and moral evil in *sin*."<sup>1</sup>

Every evil the condition of a greater good.

Examining each of these categories in turn, Leibnitz demonstrates that every evil is the necessary condition of a greater good. God directly wills good. He does not will evil, or only permits it indirectly. With the schoolmen we may distinguish in Him two aspects of the will: one an *antecedent* will, which has all that is good for its object; and the other a *consequent* and decretory will, which acts for the best and includes evil as a condition of good.

1. "Metaphysical" evil explained by the necessary imperfection of the creature condition.

1. Metaphysical evil is easily explained. In the first place, it is purely negative, since it consists in the absence of perfection. Further, it follows from the very essence of creatures: for the Divine perfection being incommunicable, every created thing is, in virtue of that, imperfect. Would you exclude every imperfection? You reduce God to Himself; you make a God who is sterile and powerless.

Evil arises not from the will of God, but from the nature of things.

We thus see clearly that the principle of evil is not in the will of God, but in the nature of

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Theodicée*, part i., 21. [The addition of metaphysical evil to the usual *malum pœnae* and *malum culpa* appears to be due to Thomas Aquinas: "Utrum malum sufficienter dividatur per pœnam et culpam . . . videtur . . . secundo: in rebus irrationalibus non invenitur culpa nec pœna, invenitur tamen in eis corruptio et defectus quod ad malum pertinet. Ergo, non omne malum est pœna vel culpa . . . Respondeo . . . Ad secundum dicendum, quod pœna et culpa non dividunt malum simpliciter, sed malum in rebus voluntariis."—*Summa Theol.*, Quæst. xlviii., art. 5.]

things. Are we now to say that the nature of things is independent of God, and places a limit to His perfections?<sup>1</sup> Leibnitz solves this objection excellently, by distinguishing the Divine will, the source of existences, from the Divine understanding, the source of essences, the region of possibilities and of eternal truths, in which the nature of things has its final basis.

"The ancients," he observes, "made matter the cause of evil, which they believed to be uncreated, and independent of God. But where shall we, who derive all being from God, find the source of evil? The answer is, that we must look for it in the ideal nature of the creature, inasmuch as this nature is enclosed in the eternal truths which are in the mind of God, independently of His will."<sup>2</sup>

2. Physical evil, that is, suffering, presents much more formidable difficulties, and Leibnitz confesses that it is one of the labyrinths where wisdom is in danger of being lost. How can we understand that a God who is good should have shown Himself so frugal in enjoyment, so profuse in suffering for His creatures? How can we understand that a just God should have confounded good and bad under the same law, even causing it to weigh more heavily upon those who deserve better?<sup>3</sup>

It was to clear up this mystery that Malebranche's

<sup>1</sup> [Mr. Jowett, with a bitter sneer at Bishop Butler, expresses the objection to "impossibilities in the nature of things," in reference to a "the different subject. "Thus we introduce a principle superior to God, just as in the Grecian mythology fate and necessity are superior to Jupiter."—*Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 472. Cf., *Hooker, Eccles. Pol.*, Book i., ch. iii.]

<sup>2</sup> *Essais de Theodicee*, Part 1., 20.

<sup>3</sup> [Bolingbroke has called this an "absorption of God's moral in His natural attributes."]

branche introduced his principle of the necessary simplicity of the Divine ways. This principle is true in itself, and he has drawn many happy applications from it. That the spectacle of the world may not be a stumbling-block to faith, we must place ourselves, not at the point of view of this or that creature, but of the total of the universe. We then understand that apparent disorders are the result of a hidden order. To demand of God that His lightning should spare the life of the righteous man is to ask Him to work perpetual miracles, that is, to deny Himself. This is true and solid. But when Malebranche attempts to bring everything under his principle; when he represents God as so occupied with His ways, that He is indifferent to His works, proposing His glory as His sole end, to the injury of His creatures, and paying no heed to the intrinsic value of things; this system of optimism becomes arbitrary and exclusive. It immolates all the attributes of God to one—wisdom; and seems to make goodness completely evaporate.

Male-  
branche  
applies his  
principle  
too largely.

Bayle's  
attack  
upon  
Male-  
branche's  
octrine.

This is an extreme over which Bayle does not fail to triumph with his usual powerful wit. "It would seem," he says, "that God has only created the world to cause His infinite knowledge of architecture and mechanics to be seen, without His attribute as good, and as the friend of virtue, having any part in the construction of this great work. This God would only value Himself upon His science. He would rather let the whole human race perish than permit some atoms to go more quickly or more slowly than general

laws require." To which Leibnitz answers: Leibnitz considers his position unassailable by Bayle.  
 "M. Bayle would not have made this supposition, had he been aware of the system of general harmony, which I conceive, and whose import is, that the domain of efficient causes, and that of final causes, run parallel; that God is no less truly the best Monarch than the greatest Architect; that matter is so disposed, that the laws of motion are subservient to the better government of minds; and consequently, that it will be found that He has realized the greatest possible good, counting in all kinds of good together, metaphysical, physical, and moral."<sup>1</sup>

It is striking to see Leibnitz here apply all the resources of his universal knowledge, and of his powerful intellect, for the purpose of calculating the quantity of good in the world by comparison with the evil, and of demonstrating that the result of this calculation is finally on the side of the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God.

He is still more to be admired, when he faces the problem of moral evil, and does not rest before he has solved two of its greatest difficulties, Leibnitz touches on 3. Moral evil.  
 one relative to the physical; the other, to the moral concurrence of God. Physically speaking, Leibnitz proves that sin supposes no positive act of the Divine will.<sup>2</sup> The efficacious activity

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Theodicée*, Part III., 247.

<sup>2</sup> [In the recoil from certain popular excesses, such passages as those which speak of God's "hardening Pharaoh's heart," are sometimes explained away rather than fairly faced. I have sometimes thought that their true meaning might be put thus: In the realm of nature, Scripture speaks of many things as God's doing, which we speak of in another strain, e.g., Psalm civ., &c., &c. Modern science shows us the immediate laws upon which such phenomena depend, rightly enough, so far. Scripture shows us the finger touching the chain higher up—and this is profoundly true; for in the last result it is God who



which he has given to man is sufficient to explain it, and so much the more, as moral evil generally comes, not from a positive action of the will, but rather from a deficiency; which made the schoolmen say: *Malam causam habet, non efficientem, sed deficientem.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus, to speak accurately, God gives no physical concurrence to evil. His alleged moral concurrence is equally unfounded. It is clear, that to create man free, even while foreseeing the aberrations of that freedom, is not to concur in it. God directly wills the liberty of man, because it is a good: He renders its abuse possible, because that is the condition of using it; man alone wills sin, and we must say with the ancient philosopher, "Jupiter! all comes from thee, except evil, which comes from the heart of the wicked."

Conclu-  
sions from  
optimism.

The true conclusion from, and interpretation of, all this system of optimism will be found in the views of Leibnitz upon the immortality of the soul, and, in general, upon the successive transformations, and the perpetual progress of beings.

Limitation  
and par-  
tiality of  
our views.

He who only contemplates the world in which humanity lives; he even who, elevating his thoughts towards the infinite worlds of which our own is only a portion, merely fastens upon the present and visible condition of men and of the other beings in the universe, will never be able

"sendeth springs into the valleys," and "causeth the grass to grow." Analogously in the world of mind. It is a law, that emotions unused make the heart harden. As "God causes the wind to blow," so He "hardens Pharaoh's heart.]"

<sup>1</sup> [This thought may serve to throw light upon the mysterious fact of a sinless being having been exposed to temptation.]

to comprehend the economy of the Divine plan, because he only sees, so to say, one scene in the eternal drama of universal life.

"It is contrary to justice," say the jurists, "to give judgment before having read the whole law. We, men, know but a slender portion of that eternal duration which must extend to infinity; for what are those few thousand years of which history transmits to us the record? And yet, with so short an experience, our rashness dares to pronounce upon that which is infinite and eternal, as captives might do at the bottom of a dungeon; or, if you will, like men born and bred in the Thracian salt mines, who should persuade themselves that there is no other light than the feeble gleam of those flickering lamps which are scarcely sufficient to direct their steps in the darkness!"<sup>1</sup>

In fact, every being—man, animal, plant, and even inanimate thing—is immortal by its nature. Natural  
immor-  
tality of  
all beings.

Nothing perishes, as nothing commences to be, actually speaking. Creation and annihilation are not natural but divine things; and we must conceive them not in time but in eternity. To our corporeal eyes, beings seem to come out of and to go back to nothing. Reason dissipates these prejudices. She teaches us that beings are only transformed without cessation, passing from one given state to another, like the points of a curve.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [This passage is in the fragment first published by Erdmann in 1840: *De Rerum Originatione Radicali*, p. 147.]

<sup>2</sup> ["The researches of chemists have shown that what the vulgar call corruption, destruction, &c., is nothing but a change of arrangement of the same ingredient elements, without the loss or actual destruction of a single atom. . . . The destruction produced by fire is more striking: in many cases, as in the burning of a piece of charcoal

And as there are in the most regular curves points of inflexion and repulsion, as geometricians say, just so are there abrupt changes of condition in the course of the developments of a being. It is this which is called death. In reality there is no death, but a perpetual and most spontaneous progress of this entire universe to a height of beauty and universal perfection such as beseems Divine works; so that the world is always moving on to a greater glory. (*Ita ut ad majorem semper cultum procedat.*)

Thus all beings are immortal, and on the way of perpetual and indefinite progress; but, among all, there is one who is capable of knowing all the rest, of embracing the plan of the universe, and of linking it to its Divine principle. Much more than this—this gifted being has another advantage more eminent again; he ministers to the completion of the plans of God. This being is not a thing; he is a person. In his own little world, he is a sort of providence, an image of the universal providence. Such a being not only cannot lose his substance, but, above all, he cannot lose that in it which is most singular and divine, moral person-

or a taper, there is no smoke . . . and when all has disappeared, except perhaps some trifling ashes, we naturally enough suppose it is gone, lost, destroyed. But . . . we detect in the invisible steam of heated air, which ascends from the glowing coal or flaming wax, the *whole* ponderable matter. . . . Yet so far from thereby being destroyed, it is only become again what it was before it existed in the form of charcoal or wax . . . so that for aught we can see to the contrary, the same identical atom may lie concealed for centuries in a limestone rock; may at length be quarried, set free in the limekiln, mix with the air, be absorbed from it by plants, and, in succession, become a part of the frames of myriads of living beings."—*Natural History*, by Sir J. Herschell, p. 42. This view of the absolute indestructibility of material atoms makes Hamlet's speculations upon the mutations of Alexander's dust "modest" enough.]

ality. And this is not a mere hope with which the sage may innocently delight his spirit. It is a certain truth, the meeting-point of all the sciences of nature and all the verities of the moral world. It is the conclusion of all philosophy.

“We must join morality to metaphysics, if we would judge, even on the foot of natural reason, that God will always preserve, not only our substance, but further our *personality*. By this word I mean the recollection and the knowledge of what we are, though the distinct knowledge may be sometimes suspended in sleep and swoons. And we must join moral to metaphysical considerations, by regarding God not only as the principle and cause of all substances and beings, but still further as the chief of all intelligent *persons*, and as the absolute monarch of the most perfect city or republic, such as is that of the universe, composed of all spirits together, God Himself being as much the most perfect of all minds, as He is the greatest of all beings. For, assuredly, spirits are the most perfect of all creatures, and those which express Deity best. All the nature, end, virtue, and function of substances, is only to express God and the universe; and so it cannot be doubted that the substances which express Him with an articulate knowledge of what they do, and which are capable of knowing great truths in reference to God and the universe, express Him incomparably better than those natures which are either brute, or incapable of knowing truths, or quite destitute of feeling and knowledge; and the difference between intelligent substances and those which are not is as great as that between the mirror and

Moral personality finishes the natural proof of the immortality of the soul.

him who sees. And as God Himself is the greatest and wisest of spirits, it is easy to judge that the beings with which He can, so to say, enter into conversation, and even into society, by communicating to them His thoughts and His will in a particular manner, and so that they can know and love their benefactor, must touch Him infinitely more than other things, which can only be considered as the instruments of spirits."

"In fact, spirits are the substances which are most capable of being perfected, and their perfections have this peculiarity that they hinder one another least, or rather that they mutually assist each other; for the most virtuous can alone be the most perfect friends. Whence it manifestly follows that God, whose dealings always tend to the greatest perfection in general, will have the greatest care for spirits, and will give to them, not only in general, but even to each one of them in particular, the most perfection which harmony will permit. It may be said that God, in so far as He is a spirit, is the origin of existences; otherwise, if He wanted will to choose the best, there would be no reason for one possibility existing preferably to others. Thus, the quality which God possesses of being Himself a spirit goes before all other considerations which He can have in respect of creatures. Spirits only are made in His image, as if of His race, or as children of His house, since they only can serve Him freely, and knowingly act in imitation of the Divine nature. One spirit alone is worth more than a whole world, since it not only expresses that world, but knows it also, and is governed in it as God orders.

So that it seems, that whilst every substance expresses the universe, other substances express the world rather than God, but spirits express God rather than the world. And this noble nature of spirits, which makes them approach as near to the Divinity as is possible for mere creatures, brings it to pass that God derives from them infinitely more glory than from other creatures, or rather other beings only afford to spirits grounds for glorifying Him. This is why that *moral* quality of God, which makes Him Lord or King of spirits, concerns Him, so to say, personally, in quite a singular way. It is in this way that He humanizes Himself—that He is willing to suffer anthropologies, and that He enters into relation with us, as a prince with his subjects. And this consideration is so dear to Him, that the happy and flourishing state of His empire, which consists in the greatest possible felicity of its inhabitants, becomes the highest of His laws. For happiness is to persons what perfection is to beings. And if the first principle of the existence of the physical world is the determination to give it the greatest perfection which He can, the first design of the moral world, or the city of God, which is the noblest part of the universe, must be to spread over it the greatest possible felicity. We must not, therefore, doubt that God has so ordered all that spirits may not only live for ever—which cannot fail to be the case—but that they may always preserve their moral quality, so that His city may lose no *person*, as His world loses no substance.”<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> I take these fine pages of Leibnitz from the *Correspondance* first published by M. Grotiefend in 1846.

The Gos-  
pel has re-  
published  
Natural  
Religion.

“The ancient philosophers were but very imperfectly acquainted with these important truths. Jesus Christ alone has expressed them divinely well, and in a manner so clear and familiar that the lowest intellects have conceived them. Thus His gospel has entirely changed the face of human affairs. He has acquainted us with the kingdom of heaven, or that perfect republic of souls, which deserves the title of the city of God, and whose admirable laws He has revealed to us. He alone has made us see how much God loves us, and with what exactitude He has provided for all which concerns us: that caring, as He does, for the sparrows, He will not neglect reasonable creatures, who are infinitely dearer to Him; that all the hairs of our head are numbered: that heaven and earth shall pass away, rather than the word of God, and that which belongs to the economy of our salvation; that God has more regard for the the lowest rational soul than for the whole machine of the material world; that we should not fear those who can destroy the body, but cannot hurt our souls, since God only can make them happy or miserable, and that the souls of the righteous are hidden in the shadow of His hand from all the revolutions of the universe, nothing but God only being able to act upon them; that none of our actions is forgotten; that all is reckoned, down to our idle words and to a cup of water well bestowed: finally, that all must work together for the greatest good of the righteous; that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, and that neither our senses nor our minds have ever tasted aught that approaches the happiness which God has laid up for them who love Him.”

What can philosophy know of this happiness of the future life? Nothing definite, answers Leibnitz; for the domain of reason does not extend so far. But reason *can* assure us that the future state of the soul will not be a condition of immobility, of idle and barren contemplation. How can the soul lose its essence, which is activity; and its law, which is progress? and how, if it were finite, and developed itself in time, could it attain and possess its eternal and infinite ideal? "Thus, our happiness will never consist, and cannot consist, in a full enjoyment, where there would be nothing more to desire, and which would stupefy the spirit,<sup>1</sup> but in a perpetual progress to new pleasures and new perfections."

Philosophy  
can tell us  
no particu-  
lars of  
future bliss  
—save the  
activity and  
the pro-  
gress of the  
soul.

<sup>1</sup> [Many readers will be reminded of Madame de Gasparin's beautiful expansion of these words in the "Near and Heavenly Horizons," especially in her repudiation of *le Paradis qui fait peur*.]



## Sixth Treatise.

### *The Scepticism of Kant.*



Merits of  
the Leib-  
nitian  
Theistic  
system.

Yet, after  
all, it is but  
a system.

HAVE I found, finally, in Leibnitz the complete and absolute truth upon God, and have I nothing to do but to hold it fast as my most cherished treasure, and to preserve it from the attacks of scepticism? So I thought for a considerable period, and whenever I read over again the *Essais de Theodicee*, I begin to think so anew. What an admirable creation it is! How grand, yet how simple are the thoughts; what prevailing genius and good sense? All the requirements of one's soul are satisfied. The heart is touched. The reason is convinced. And, at the same time, the bold and discursive imagination sees limitless horizons opening before it. I would willingly stop at this point, but it is impossible. The more I consider the connection of his thoughts upon Divine things, the more clearly I see that all his views are bound up with a vast system, from which it is most difficult to separate them. Unquestionably, this system is one of marvellous grandeur and richness. It embraces every object which human curiosity can propose to itself. It

pursues the explanation of the enigma of existence to the furthest barriers of reason. It is, I believe, the vastest system which the intellect of man has ever conceived. But, however vast it may be, is it anything but a system?

1. Is the conception of God, as the supreme monad of which all finite monads are continual fulgurations, entirely free from error and peril? I am afraid that I find too much analogy with the *natura naturans* of Spinoza. If, in fact, God be defined as absolute force, can I conceive God otherwise than in act? Is it not the essence of a force to develop itself? Then what becomes of the notion of the all-perfect Being, of that immutable and perfect principle, who is perfectly self-sufficing, and has no need of anything but Himself?

*Four leading objections.*  
1. The monad always in act and necessarily developing itself is perilously like Spinoza's "*natura naturans*."

2. Again, is the conception of these monads continually emanating from the creature and containing in itself the germ of all its developments, one which satisfies the *data* of experience? Is there not a kind of universal *fatalism* in this evolution, regulated by the law of continuity?

2. A sort of *fatalism* implied in the notion of the monad, as containing in itself the germ of all its developments.

3. And, when we contemplate more closely these forces, which do not go out of themselves, which are hermetically sealed against every exterior influence, "not having," as Leibnitz says, "windows outwards;" do they appear to be real forces? Are they not more like *mathematical abstractions*, such, for instance, as the successive points of a rigorously continued curve, of which the equation has been written from all eternity?

3. These forces of Leibnitz are a sort of *mathematical abstractions*.

4. I ask Leibnitz further how these monads, which are, *ex hypothesi*, simple units, can explain

4. Leibnitz is forced to explain *extension* and *motion*, the action of the will upon the muscles by saying that they are *illusory*, which is *sceptical*.

extension and motion? He will reply that extension and motion are nothing absolute, but simple phenomena, evanescent appearances, like the rainbow. He might as well tell me at once that, in his eyes, they are mere *illusions*. But already, if I am to believe him, the influence which I suppose that I exercise upon my limbs is an illusion. The continued mutual action and re-action of all the beings of nature is an illusion. I live then in a world of illusions! and who knows but that God, whom I represent to myself as the living and active centre of this world, is not also an *ILLUSION*, like the rest?

Contradictions of the great theistic philosophers.

Let us see the point to which Descartes and Leibnitz, Malebranche and Newton, lead us, by different paths. One presents me with his vortices, the other with his monads. One is for the *plenum*, another for the *vacuum*. One declares himself a dynamist, the other a mechanist.

Descartes speaks of a God whose omnipotence is so absolute as not only to make beings but truths at its will. No, exclaims Malebranche; the will of God is regulated by His wisdom. Here is Newton, who represents God as spread over duration and space, limiting His so-called fecundity to scattering across the infinite plains of immensity some atoms, whose frail economy is every instant threatened with dissolution. Leibnitz protests against this, and maintains that God is outside time and space, and that without falling into time, He fills spaces and ages with the fulgurations of His infinite power.

What a mass of contradictory thoughts! If Descartes and Newton, Malebranche and Leib-

nitz, have not come to an understanding, are these great geniuses to blame? The human mind alone is in fault. Why, in fact, do metaphysical systems succeed one another, whilst none is able to last, and to establish itself permanently? What is the good of these movements which merely agitate thought, without pushing it forward a single step? Is not the answer to these questions contained in the fact, that the problem of the nature of things surpasses man; that systems simply express the forms of our understanding, that is, the different points of view, under which we represent things to ourselves; that we have no certain hold upon aught but the objects of experience, and that we must be content with exploring the surface of things, eternally impotent as we are to pierce the mystery of their origin, and of their end.

These contradictions leave an impression of doubt.

Sceptical conclusions.

These are the doubts which glide into my mind as I look upon these contradictions of the great representatives of metaphysical genius. These thoughts are not peculiar to me. They have been suggested to great minds, to Voltaire and Reid, to Locke, Hume, and Kant. They were the common stock of the opinion of a whole century. I should feel a scruple in overlooking all these great doubters. And I wish to give them as their interpreter the man who is considered to have most resolutely embraced, and most powerfully conceived and combined, what was in the mind of all the others. This man is Kant. I am told that the forms of his system are lumbering and pedantic. This signifies little, if I can comprehend its substance.

Kant, the representative of scepticism.

The  
"waken-  
ing" of  
Kant from  
his "dog-  
matic  
slumber."  
He is first  
struck by  
the unpro-  
gressive  
character  
of philo-  
sophical  
specula-  
tion.

Kant tells us, with that sincerity which enhances the power and originality of his genius by the beauty of his character, that his first real initiator in philosophy was David Hume. When the reading of the Scotch philosopher had, as he says, "wakened him from his dogmatic slumber," the first fact which struck his attention was the variety, the contradiction, and the rapid decline of all metaphysical systems. The emancipated disciple of Leibnitz and Wolff was now able to ask himself the question, How is it that philosophy, for two thousand years, has been thus wandering at the mercy of the barren and changing reveries which are dignified by the title of systems, whilst other sciences display an activity so regular in its progress, and so fruitful in its results?<sup>1</sup> Mathematics have pre-eminently this characteristic. It is true that they change and are renewed, but it is to increase and grow richer. Descartes surpassed Euclid. Newton, in turn, surpassed them. But the infinitesimal calculus has not destroyed the Cartesian analysis, any more than it overthrew the ancient geometry. In metaphysics, on the contrary, systems supersede systems. A philosopher cannot think himself right without condemning all others to error; and the work perpetually begun in its entirety has always to be taken up anew.

<sup>1</sup> ["*Illæ (scientiæ) suls immotæ ferè hærent vestigiis. In artibus autem mechanicis, contrarium eveni videmurquæ, ac si auræ cujusdam vitalis forent participes, quotidie crescunt et perficiuntur. Philosophia contra et scientiæ intellectuales, statuarum more, adorantur et celebrantur, sed non promoventur: quin etiam in primo nonnumquam auctore maximè vigent, et deinceps degenerant.*"]—Bacon. *Prefatio ad Instaur. Magnam.*]

To penetrate the cause of this extraordinary contrast, Kant submits the inmost constitution of the sciences to a profound analysis. He remarks, and it is a gleam of light for him, that the object of mathematics is not to know things in themselves, but only to develope certain notions inherent in the human mind, the notions of number, space, and the like.<sup>1</sup> For instance, geometry does not concern itself with the essence of natural bodies; it fixes upon the notion of extension, a notion independent of the senses, and with this perfectly ideal and abstract *datum*, developes the vast series of its constructions and theorems. The object of geometry is not any being in itself,—it is an idea. Just so, algebra has nothing to say to those changeable objects whose equality is only apparent, and whose unity is quite relative; it is ideal quantity, abstract number—that is, once more an idea, a notion, which forms the matter of its equations. Such, according to Kant, is the explanation of the peculiar solidity and uncontested certainty of the mathematical sciences.

The first gleam of light supplied by the certainty of geometry, and by its cause.

They are not alone in the possession of this privilege. The physical sciences are justly proud of their positive character, and of their regular development. But how long have they occupied this high position in the estimation of men? Only since they were separated from metaphysics, and abandoned the chimera of an absolute explana-

Certainty of physical sciences.

<sup>1</sup> [Ἀκριβεστέραν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἐπιστήμης, τὴν μὴ καθ' ὑποκειμένον τῆς καθ' ὑποκειμένου· οἷον ἀριθμητικὴν τῆς ἀρμονικῆς.—*Arist. Analyt.*, Post I., 27. “This is the great reason of the certainty and evidence of mathematical truths, because they proceed not upon sensible but abstracted matter.”—*Stillingfleet, Orig. Sac.*, B. II., c. 3. For more on this subject see Bishop Fitzgerald's edition of the *Analogy*, p. 3.]

tion of things, to confine themselves to experiment, which collects facts, and to calculation, which applies to them the laws of thought. Physical science has no business to meddle with the impenetrable essence of things. Are corporeal bodies divisible *ad infinitum* or not? Did the world begin or not? What is that to Galileo and to Kepler? They leave the school doctors to draw up syllogisms for and against these opposite phantoms. It is enough for them to explore nature and to measure the heavens.

Logic, as the formal science of the laws of thought, shares in the certainty of physical and mathematical science.

Question the history of the philosophical sciences themselves. Since Aristotle, everything in philosophy has changed, with one exception—logic. Metaphysics vary with their systems, logic survives them. Why is this? Because logic is in no sort occupied with the *objects of thought*, but only with *thought* itself. He created logic who first put this problem to himself—On what conditions can thought, while developing itself, always remain consistent with its own laws?<sup>1</sup> Where are Aristotle's *entelechia*, his substantial forms, and his first heaven? They are no more; but the *organon* remains. It remains with the history of animals, because two things only abide in the sciences—the facts of visible nature, and the laws of thought.

General conclusion, the *objective* is inaccessible.

Such appears to me to be the leading idea of the *Critique of pure Reason*. It is as simple as it is bold. Of the two elements whose relation and harmony compose science—on one side, the human

<sup>1</sup> [The school of eminent logicians, who have lately adorned the University of Oxford, have made this their primary doctrine. See especially Bishop Thomson's *Outlines of the Laws of Thought*, and Mr. Mansel's *Prolegomena Logica* and edition of Aldrich.]

mind, the *subject*, and on the other, things, beings, the *object*—Kant proposes to suppress the second, and to reduce science to the first. To eliminate the *objective* for ever, as absolutely inaccessible, and to resolve all into the *subjective*, this is his end, and here are the great lines of his enterprise. Kant makes me follow alternately two diverse and convergent roads. At first he locks me up in the *subject*, that is, in the analysis of the human mind, and reducing all the laws which govern thought to a certain number of rigorously defined and classified elementary concepts, he proves to me that these concepts have a purely subjective and relative value, that they are unable to teach me anything about the essence of things, and that their sole utility is to co-ordinate the phenomena of experience, in other words, to impress a character of unity upon the objects of human knowledge. When this work is finished, Kant proposes to submit the results of his analysis to a great dialectic test. He runs successively over the three great objects of metaphysical speculation—the soul, the universe, and God. He undertakes to make me see that there is not so much as one dogmatic assertion upon the essence of the soul, upon the origin and elements of the universe, or upon the existence of God, which cannot be convicted of resting upon a paralogism, of concealing an antinomy, or of arbitrarily realising an abstraction.

All the laws which govern thought, reduced to certain elementary concepts, possessing a purely subjective value.

I shall now follow the *Critique of pure Reason* upon the ground of analysis and that of dialectics. Kant decomposes the whole mechanism of human knowledge into *three* intellectual functions.

Three intellectual functions—Sensibility, Understanding, and Reason.



To perceive particular objects, in other words, to form intuitions, is the proper act of *Sensibility*.

To grasp the relations of objects, and to form judgments, is the peculiar act of the *Understanding*.

To form reasonings, that is to say, to link judgments together, and to attach consequences to their principles, is the peculiar act of the *Reason*.

There are two elements in the exercise of each—a concept *a priori*, and a datum *a posteriori*.

Now, in the exercise of each of these three intellectual functions, analysis discovers two elements. One is *à priori*, the other *a posteriori*. The first forms the matter of our knowledge, the second constitutes its form. The former is given, so to speak, from without; the other springs from the stock of the mind, from its native activity and spontaneity.

Thus no act of Sensibility, or no Intuition, is possible, without the help of the notions of *space* and *time*. Kant maintains that these notions are *a priori*, and he calls them pure forms of Sensibility.

In the same way, no act of the Understanding, or no Judgment, is possible, but by the help of certain notions of unity, reality, possibility, which are equally *a priori*, and which Kant calls pure concepts of the Understanding.

Finally, no act of Reason, or no Reasoning, is possible, without the help of certain notions of the Absolute, or of the Unconditional. Kant gives them the name of pure ideas of the Reason. The point, then, is to collect these forms, these concepts, and ideas which are the supreme laws, and constitutive springs of human reason, to sound their nature deeply, and to measure their bearing.

I. 1. The analysis of *Sensibility* is a capital

point in the Kantian system. In fact, Sensibility is the source of Intuitions, which become the matter of judgments and consequently of reasonings,—a process which leads us to the idea of the Absolute, the highest form of all our knowledge.

I. Analytical portion of Kant's work.  
1. Analysis of *first* intellectual function—sensibility, Transcendental Æsthetics.  
Perception of external phenomenon, its two elements; the phenomena itself, and the conditions, space and time.

In every perception of an external phenomenon, Kant distinguishes two things. On one side, there is the phenomenon itself, say such a corporeal movement. On the other side, there is the condition of the motion, that is to say, space, without which no motion could be perceived. The external phenomena vary infinitely; space, the condition of these phenomena, is always the same. Space, then, is, according to Kant, the pure form of the exterior senses. In the same way, Time is the pure form of the inward sense, no sensation and in general no modification of ourselves being perceptible, except under the condition of Time. Space and Time, then, are the two pure forms of Sensibility; and being conceived as anterior to phenomena, as one and infinite, they are not objects of experience, which only gives phenomena which are always diverse and always limited. What, then, are space and time? Shall we make of them absolute and objective things? But in that case, we equally fall into absurdity, whether we elevate them to the rank of objective beings, or make them attributes of God, or reduce them to properties or relations of the beings of nature. In the first case, in fact, we end by admitting two absolute beings, which are both nonentities. In the second, we confound time with eternity, and space with immensity. In the third, we give space

and time a merely contingent value; and thus we become unable to explain the absolute character of the two sciences founded upon the notions of space and time—Geometry and rational Mechanics. Hence it follows that space and time have no sort of objective reality, and can be nothing else than forms of knowledge, necessary and universal forms, data *a priori*, but having no bearing beyond the *subject*; only expressing the nature of thought, and having no other use than to render experience possible.

Error of  
Kant's  
analysis.

Such is the substance of the *Transcendental Æsthetics* of Kant. It must be admitted that it is subtle, profound, and original. But is it correct? I think not. And if the premisses are incorrect the conclusions must be erroneous also. All this ingenious theory of Kant upon space and time encloses an error which is repeated through the whole course of his analytic work, and vitiates all its results. In place of observing reality, he works restlessly at abstractions. In place of looking for the origin of our fundamental notions in consciousness, he takes them up ready made in the state to which they have been brought by a long series of abstractions. And then, he imagines that these abstract notions are prior to experience, without which, however, they would be perfectly erroneous and unintelligible.

The true  
history of  
thought on  
space and  
time leads  
to a dif-  
ferent  
theory  
from Kant's  
abstract  
w.

Kant considers time and space under their most general and abstract forms, anterior to any notion of sensible extension, or of particular and determined duration. But it is incorrect to say that my mind begins with such conceptions. Before the abstract is the concrete. The notion

of space is posterior to that of extension, the notion of time to that of succession and personal identity. I see or touch a body, I perceive it as extended; in handling it I pass from one impression to another, I feel that I am identical in the succession of these two conditions. I feel that I endure; there is not yet in my mind the abstract idea of space or of time. It is only after perceiving many extensions, and many durations, that I form by abstraction the general idea of space and the general idea of time, so as to arrive finally by reason at a being, infinite, absolute, free from the limitations of extension—untouched by the vicissitudes of time, in short, immense and eternal—beyond all bodies and all durations.

Here, then, is the true history of my mind instead of the fantastic history traced by Kant,—(1.) *first*, by an act of intuition, the concrete notions of such and such sensible extension, or determined duration; (2.) *then*, by an act of abstraction, the general notions of space and time; (3.) *finally*, by an act of reason, the absolute conceptions of eternity and immensity.

Having once separated and isolated space and time from every concrete intuition of extension, duration, it is not strange that he finds these notions void, hollow, and meaningless. To give them reality and significance, it is sufficient to refer them to their true origin, and replace them in the bosom of consciousness.

A Kantian will possibly ask me what I think of the objective nature of space and time. I should answer, that we must distinguish between extension, space, and immensity, just as we must

Extension, space, and immensity, duration, time, and eternity, are to be carefully distinguished in opposition to the error of Kant.

Kantian objection—  
“What do you think of the objectivity of space and time?”

distinguish between duration, time, and eternity. Extension is a real property of bodies, and duration a real property of all beings which change; immensity and eternity are two attributes of the Divine Being, which express the permanence and omnipresence of His existence, profoundly distinct from and independent of all succession and every finite form; space and time, finally, are pure abstractions.

Opposition to Kant's view of space and time does not lead to their being objectified, on pain of cashiering geometry and mechanics from their necessary and absolute character.

I admit that it is unreasonable to make objective entities of space and time. I grant, further, that it is equally untenable to conceive God as protended in time, and extended in space even infinitely. But I am not driven, by these admissions, to refuse their absolute character to the sciences of extension and motion. Whilst I recognise that the propositions of geometry are absolutely necessary, I can explain their necessity very differently from Kant. Geometry rests upon the idea of space, an abstract idea, in my opinion. But this abstract idea once given, all the consequences deducible from it are necessary, by a necessity inherent to the very principle of reasoning, to the principle of identity. The triangle or the circle are not real things. They are pure constructions of the mind, tracing, as it were, different precise limitations in the bosom of the idea of abstract extension. But when the circle is once given as a circle, its radii must necessarily be equal. Such is the necessity inherent in geometrical propositions. It has no need of an imaginary *à priori* intuition of space, one and infinite. It has only need of this necessary principle, “A is A”—a circle is a circle, a thing cannot be different from itself—an

evidently necessary and absolute principle, which communicates its necessity to all its consequences.

I. 2. The analysis of the understanding, in Kant's system, has the same defects as that of the sensibility. It is false and artificial, mistaking abstractions for realities, and destitute of true observation of the consciousness. The definite point is to give an account of a certain number of first notions which are, as a matter of fact, present in all our judgments, such as the notions of cause, substance, unity, which become the base of those great principles upon which the entire system of human knowledge rests. Kant does not observe the human consciousness, and keep his eye steadfastly fixed upon the real and living principle which says *I*, which apprehends itself immediately, which feels that it lives, acts, continues, which perceives itself not as an abstract condition of thought, but as a real and living subject, a true cause, a true substance, a true unity. He does not contemplate this world of inner realities. Instead of doing this, he loses himself in an inextricable labyrinth of abstract conceptions and arbitrary distinctions. He tricks out a table of all possible precedents. He recognises twelve kinds, divided by threes into four distinct frames, according to their quality, relation, and modality. These twelve kinds of judgments—general, particular, and singular—affirmative, negative, and limitative—categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive—problematical, assertorial, and apodeictic—represent, in his eyes, twelve logical functions of the understanding, twelve distinct processes for reducing any given variety to unity.

2 Analysis of the understanding—parallel error to that in the analysis of the sensibility.

Kantian  
categories.

Thus he introduces his famous categories—unity, plurality, and totality—relation, negation, and limitation—inherence, dependence, and reciprocity—possibility, existence, and necessity.

Above the  
categories  
in this  
hierarchy  
is the trans-  
cendental  
unity of  
conscious-  
ness, or  
synthetic  
unity of  
appercep-  
tion.

According to Kant, all these concepts are, *a priori*, anterior to all experience, and absolutely necessary for the formation of the least judgment.

Nor is this all. A new condition is necessary.

Above these twelve pure forms of the understanding Kant places one general form, which he calls the synthetic unity of apperception, or the transcendental unity of the consciousness.

We must not suppose that he here speaks of that consciousness which each of us has of his own acts—of that consciousness which translates itself into language by the affirmations, I feel, I think, I am. No! The consciousness of Kant is an abstract consciousness, a logical *cogito*, a general form of thought. In short, it is not a fact, a reality; it is a pure abstraction, arbitrarily elevated into a necessary *a priori* condition of every possible judgment.

Supple-  
mentary  
theory of  
*schematism*.

This analysis may seem sufficiently complicated already. But Kant has not ended yet. He flatters himself that he has given a good account of the pure concepts of unity, inherence, dependence, &c.; but he has not yet touched the notions of cause, substance, activity, and the corresponding principles. This is why he adds his theory of *schematism*. Besides his twelve pure concepts, he wants twelve *schemes*, representatives *a priori* of time, schemes of quantity, quality, relation, modality. He wants these representations to *vivify* his abstract concepts, to render them

applicable to the *data* of experience, to give them meaning and value.

I have at last exhausted the subtle, complicated, and laborious series of conditions under which Kant thinks that he has succeeded in giving an account of the human mind—for instance, those of causality and substance. But if I must say what I think, nothing can be falser or emptier than this pretended deduction, which has cost him so many efforts. Kant radically alters the notions of cause and of substance. When I produce a voluntary action, an effort of my muscles for instance, there is not a mere vague and abstract relation between these two terms—my will and the effort—such as—Given A, B should necessarily follow.<sup>1</sup> There is a precise and determinate relation. My will produces the effort. My will is a cause of which the effort is an effect, a cause which is fixed, one and identical, and which manifests itself by an indefinite variety of phenomena. The more deeply I study the notion of this activity, of this *I* which is the basis of my consciousness, the more I recognise the truth that it perceives itself, not only as a *cause* but as a *substance*—I mean, as a being alternately or simultaneously active and passive, but always identical under the succession of its diverse modifications. This is not an abstract substance, like that of Kant, a nameless something conceived as permanent in opposition to the constant flux of phenomena, of which

His erroneous account of cause and substance.

He confuses the notion of cause with that of succession, and the notion of substance with that of permanence.

<sup>1</sup> Kant reduces the notion of cause to this, "As for the concept of cause, abstracting from the time in which one thing succeeds another regularly, I can find nothing in the pure category but the existence of something, from which the existence of another thing may be inferred." *Critique of Pure Reason*, I., 270, Tissot's Translation.



this permanent term is the abstract and *a priori* condition. It is a real and determinate substance, which knows and feels that it acts and exists. Here is an analysis which is very simple and very easy to verify. Yet it suffices to bring down the whole scaffolding of abstractions — symmetrical, subtle, and ingenious, I allow, but quite artificial — which has been reared by the hand of Kant. In place of these empty, *a priori* concepts, we must substitute the immediate, real, and living intuitions of consciousness. In place of these arbitrary and useless principles, that lead nowhere, we must substitute true principles, holding by their roots to experience, and in their ample developments enfolding the universe, and leading on to God.

Such are the essential faults which strike me in the *analytic* work of Kant. This is enough to put me on my guard against the consequences which he proceeds to draw from these false principles in the *dialectical* portion of his attempt.

II. Dialectical portion of Kant's work.

Kant has lately explained to me what, in his opinion, is the part which reason has to play in the economy of our knowledge.

Reason taken generally.  
Pure reason.

Reason, taken generally, is the faculty of reasoning, that is, of referring the particular to the general. But this operation supposes a final general principle, which is the condition of all the rest, and which is itself unconditioned. The conception of this unconditioned is the office of pure reason.

Necessary illusions of pure reason.

But pure reason does not limit itself to conceiving the unconditioned. It avails itself of this idea to speculate, *a priori*, upon the nature of beings. Hence, if I am to believe Kant, arise certain ne-

cessary illusions. To destroy them for ever, he attempts to discover their psychological sources, and to construct in some sense the science of the natural laws of the human mind.

The general principle of the pure reason is this: Three ideas of pure reason—psychological—the soul; cosmological—the world; theological—God. The conditional being given, the entire series of conditions is given along with it, and consequently the unconditioned itself. This principle receives three great applications, one to the subject of thought, the second to sensible objects, the third to things in general. Hence there are three ideas, the psychological, the cosmological, and the theological. Reason seeks in consciousness a subject which is not the attribute of another subject, an absolute subject, the soul or the thinking substance. In presence of sensible objects, it ascends from phenomenon to phenomenon, and conceives something primary and definite to serve as a basis and principle for the phenomena of the Cosmos. Finally, embracing the absolute sum total of all possible existences, it lays down, as the condition of this total, an absolute unity which is God.

These three ideas, these three principles, the God, the world, and the soul, soul, the Cosmos, and God, in virtue of their very nature, can neither be demonstrated nor realized. have a purely subjective value. They can neither be demonstrated nor realized. They cannot be demonstrated—since they are that which is most general, and is the basis of all demonstration. They cannot be realized, since they represent that which is beyond all possible experience. Their value, therefore, is purely subjective. They do not extend human knowledge. They at once finish and circumscribe it; that is all.

Metaphysics has other pretensions. It pro-

Overthrow  
of Meta-  
physics  
with its  
three con-  
stitutive  
sciences—  
rational  
psychology,  
rational  
cosmology,  
rational  
theology.

fesses to create the science of the soul, that of the Cosmos, and that of God. From the abstract conception of our thinking being, which contains nothing multiple, it draws a conclusion of the absolute unity of this being, which is a paralogism. From the impossibility of pausing in the backward series of phenomena, it draws the conclusion of a first condition, and as this condition is presented in two contradictory modes, an antinomy is the result. Finally, from the sum total of conditions, or of objects in general, it draws as its conclusion the Being of beings, as the condition of the possibility of things, and the foundation of universal existence, though this being is absolutely unknown to us. Hence, an *ideal* which we arbitrarily transform into a real thing, and in which we even see the foundation of all reality. Thus, the soul, the universe, and God Himself, all the objects of our thought—all the edifice of our beliefs—falls piece by piece, and crumbles away under the hand of Kant. And the conclusion of this negative dialectic is, that Metaphysics is ruined, wholly, entirely, and for ever, with its three constitutive sciences, rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology.

Answer to  
Kant's  
scepticism.  
1. Rational  
psychology  
possible, as  
based upon  
the fact of  
conscious-  
ness.

1. I hear it said, in every direction, that these objections of Kant are absolutely invincible. I do not wish to conceal that in some respects they are strong and serious. But I believe that here, just as in his analytic work, there is much more artifice than solidity. Kant reduces psychology to the four following propositions: The soul is a substance. The soul is simple. The soul is one. The soul is spiritual. But according to him, these

four propositions rest solely upon four vicious arguments, in which the same paralogism is constantly repeated. In the premisses, he says, we assume a purely subjective *Ego*, which is nothing but a logical condition of the perception of phenomena, and in passing from the premisses to the conclusion, we transform this subjective and logical into an objective *Ego*, endued with an absolute reality.

I would reply to Kant, that his dialectic may be victorious over a psychology conceived in the manner of Wolf—I mean, exclusively founded upon the abuse of logical proceedings—but that it cannot touch the true science of the soul, that which has its main support, not in syllogisms, but in a profound analysis of human nature. What, after all, is the true basis of psychology? A permanent and universal fact, that of consciousness. I feel living within me an ever-present principle, which is not confounded with the series of my modifications—which I feel identically the same under the vicissitudes of my changeful existence—which, whether in undergoing the action of external things, or in re-acting upon them without, or in concentrating itself upon itself in an altogether inward action, knows itself every instant, and every instant affirms itself with infallible clearness and certainty. Is this logical subject, this abstract form, this pure condition of the possibility of experience, about which Kant speaks, the *Ego* of which I have just spoken? Evidently not. The *Ego* of consciousness is a force in action, an energy which displays itself, something essentially real, concrete, and living. But has this

*Ego*, because it is real and concrete, nothing but an empirical value? Is it not a true being, a true substance? One would, indeed, refuse to grant this, if, with Kant, one made of substance a mysterious principle, a nameless algebraical *X*, if with him we delighted in hollowing an impassable abyss between consciousness and reason, between the world of phenomena and the world of existence. But this separation has no significance for the attentive observer. In fact, in the act of consciousness, the subject grasps itself, and affirms itself as the object. Between the *Ego* which acts, and the *Fgo* which feels that it acts, analysis may draw a distinction, but nature and the real movement of life make no such distinction—and the objective and subjective make but one.

And, now, do we need an appeal to reasoning and the construction of syllogisms, to establish the unity, the simplicity, the spirituality, the substantiality of the soul? It is clear that it is perfectly useless, and I will add that it has always appeared to me extremely dangerous. In fact, to reason for the purpose of finding the soul, is to admit that the soul does not perceive itself; it is to establish a factitious distinction between two *Egos*, the *Ego* of consciousness and that of reason; it is to raise an arbitrary barrier between them, which reasoning can never cross. In this point of view, Kant is right. Psychology exists no more, when there is no more an intuition of consciousness, which attains being, unity, and substance in their profoundest depths. Then the finishing blow is given to Metaphysics, and the human mind is condemned to be ignorant of the universe and of God, to

remain imprisoned in the region of phenomena. Here Kant has seen with a superior insight ; here, in my mind, is the value and the interest of his dialectics. But what he has not seen is this, that the basis of psychology is not a logical but a real *Ego*, not a purely phenomenal *Ego*, but one which is a cause, a substance, one, identical, living, objective, and subjective together. To re-establish this principle is to refute Kant, and at the same time, to restore their foundation to rational psychology, and to metaphysics.

2. I shall now venture to look at those famous <sup>2. Rational cosmology possible.</sup> antinomies, which, with many minds, pass for being the eternal despair and the impassable shoal of speculative philosophy. They result, in the system of Kant, from the application of the fundamental principle of reason, viz., that the conditioned being given, the entire series of conditions and therefore the unconditioned itself is equally given along with it. Apply this principle to the idea of the world, considered as a collection of exterior phenomena. You will see that four Theses are formed, against which four Antitheses rise up, whence a quadruple antinomy results. How is this? Because, according to Kant, every time that you affirm that a phenomenon is subordinate to a series of conditions, you can equally conceive this series as finite, or as infinite. In both cases, the absolute seems given, and the absolute is the chimera, which the human mind, in virtue of the laws of its nature, incessantly seeks without ever being able to grasp.

Would you consider the world, according to <sup>Antinomies,</sup> the categories of quantity and quality? You have

an equal right to consider it as limited in extension and duration, that is as finite, or to conceive it as unlimited in space and time, that is as infinite. You can represent it to yourself as being composed of simple particles, or as infinitely divisible.

Mathematical, and

These are the antinomies which Kant calls mathematical. Or would you conceive the world under new points of view, those of relation and morality?

Dynamic.

You are led to link all effects to a first free cause, or again, quite as arbitrarily, to conceive them as an infinite chain of phenomena, linked by a blind fatality. In the same way, you are equally inclined to assume a necessary existence as the basis of the series of contingent things, or to conceive this series as indefinite. These are the antinomies, called Dynamic, which complete this series of regular contradictions imposed upon the human mind by Kant.

Kant admits that the mathematical antinomies alone are absolutely insoluble.

I shall note down here one reflection which strikes me. Kant himself considers that the mathematical antinomies alone are absolutely insoluble. He admits a solution for the others. He himself labours to discover it. This is an admission of the utmost importance. For it is clear enough that the dynamic antinomies are the most serious of all, since with them are involved the existence of liberty, and even already, by anticipation, the existence of God—that is to say, morality and religion. Kant, then, allows, that on these great objects reason is not driven to the despairing avowal of an inevitable contradiction. Morality and religion are safe. All, therefore, which is seriously in danger is the interest of human curiosity, which fastens upon these purely

metaphysical questions, to which the bulk of mankind are perfectly indifferent, and ignorance upon which is easily enough borne even by the knot of inquisitive wits who agitate such speculations. For instance, the question whether matter is divisible *ad infinitum*. Such is the end of this great and solemn act of accusation which has been so laboriously set forth, and on which scepticism has lavished all its strength and ingenuity. I confess that the discussion on this narrow platform loses its imposing grandeur, but it loses also much of its danger. Put aside morality and religion, and how does it matter much, after all, that on some refined metaphysical points my mind is forced to confess its impotence?

But, even in this kind of abstract problems, it appears to me that Kant does not reach the conclusion after which he aspires. I shall arm myself against him by his own admissions. He solves the dynamical antinomies by a very just distinction between the point of view of experience and that of reason. For the senses there are but contingent phenomena; but from this, he says, it cannot be concluded that beyond phenomena, in a region to which the senses cannot reach, there is not a necessary Being, a first and spontaneous Cause, which is the principle of all the phenomena of the universe. Very well. But I would borrow from Kant his means of solution, and push it further. I would say to him, that though the senses and imagination lead us to represent to ourselves a finite world, this does not prove that reason has not the right to conceive, at least as possible, an unbounded universe, whose unlimited

But even this class of antinomies is not insoluble.

The distinction between the point of experience and that of reason, applied by Kant to the solution of the dynamical, is also valid for the solution of the mathematical antinomies.



extent and duration reflect in some sort the incommunicable eternity and immensity of God. In the same way, the senses and the imagination may stop short with satisfaction at the gross and antiquated hypothesis of atoms. But there is nothing to hinder the reason from destroying these fallacious appearances, from making us understand the impossibility of an (indivisible) extended atom—that is to say, of an indivisible divisible. There is no reason, above all, why we should not grasp the invisible causes, beyond extension and motion, whose permanent action animates the face of the world, and conceive those causes as principles endowed with unity—inferior, indeed, yet more or less analogous to, that simple and indivisible cause which we feel living and throbbing within. Thus, the fantastic assemblage of contradictions imagined by scepticism vanishes away, and out of so many efforts of a genius made for better things there remains nothing but a lesson of modesty given to the presumption of the human mind

3 Rational  
theology  
possible.

3. If these views are correct, I can, a little more confidently, grapple with the objections of Kant against the possibility of a rational theology.

In his eyes, the idea of God, or the Being of beings, is the highest and most necessary idea of reason, since it is by it that reason perfects its synthetic work, in giving its last unity to the total of human knowledge. But all the conclusion from this, he says, is simply that God is the Supreme Ideal, not the Supreme Reality. But it so happens that human curiosity cannot be satisfied with a simple ideal. With its strong desire

to penetrate deeply into things, it transforms this subjective and relative ideal into an absolute reality, and flatters itself that it is able to apprehend and to define this principle of existence.

This illusion, according to Kant, is produced by a regular process. First, the reason, contemplating this vast and harmonious universe, refers it to an invisible principle. Then, it conceives this principle as necessary to find in it the reason of the existence of contingent things. Next, from necessary being it rises to the Being of beings, who includes all realities and all possibilities as alone able to include the universal and absolute reason of all existence.

Rational theology expresses in its own fashion this spontaneous evolution of speculative reason in demonstrating the existence of God by three arguments—the *physico-theological* argument, which reposes upon the order of the universe; the *cosmological* argument, founded upon the contingency of the world; the *ontological* argument, which deduces the real existence from the concept of the perfect Being.

Three arguments of rational theology to demonstrate the existence of God.

I must admit that Kant seems to me to have perfectly succeeded in bringing out the defects of these arguments, just as a little before he easily triumphed over the syllogistic proofs of the spirituality of the soul. But are we to conclude from this that the foundations of a *Théodicée* are overthrown? No! but that Kant was unacquainted with the true foundations of a *Théodicée*. Just now, he altered and denied the immediate intuition of the *Ego* by itself. Now, he alters and denies another intuition, less clear, per-

Kant's exposure of the defects in these arguments does not affect a true *Théodicée*.

haps, but equally irrefragable, the intuition of the perfect and absolute Being. Here, again, there is not, on one side, an abstract logical concept, the concept of an absolute existence considered as purely possible; on the other, the human mind wasting itself in barren reasoning, heaping up syllogisms to find, beyond this visionary and unreal concept, the real and living God who incessantly escapes from it, and seems to hide from all its efforts. That is a false view of human consciousness, and can only give birth to a false and barren theology. I did not, in the first instance, grasp an abstract possible *Ego*, to arrive at last, across arbitrary reasonings, at a real, concrete, substantial *Ego*. Nor, when I link my frail existence to that infinite source of being, of thought, and of life, whom I call God, have I gone through a process of abstract conceptions; it is a true intuition, in which the Being of beings is affirmed, not as possible, but as real and present.

Let Kant, if he will, reduce rational theology to three syllogisms. I shall tell him that he may be right, as opposed to a disputatious philosophy founded upon pure abstractions—such, for instance, as the purely scholastic theology of Wolf, but that he cannot reach a theology in alliance with facts, and firmly based upon the real and fruitful intuitions of consciousness.

Let us see the proceeding to which Kant resorts for the purpose of overthrowing rational theology. After having attacked the physico-theological argument, founded upon final causes, which becomes in his treatment of it a purely empirical proof, without any notion of absolute perfection, and con-

sequently incapable of arriving at the principle of existence, he subtly brings up the cosmological argument, drawn from the contingency of the world, to the ontological argument, upon which it suits his purpose to concentrate the whole discussion. But what is this final argument? It is the proof with which St. Anselm was inspired by the subtler genius of scholasticism, and which was, unfortunately, resuscitated by the great geometer who founded modern philosophy. It consists in laying down the concept of possible perfection, to elicit from it by a process of reasoning the real and actual existence of a perfect Being. The ingenious subtlety of St. Anselm, and the geometrical industry of Descartes are, it is true, equally unable to work out this deduction. I make this concession to Kant, and here is the whole result of this portion of his dialectic enterprise. But has he gained his end? has he proved the inability of the human mind to grasp the first principle of thought and being? Clearly not.

Such is the impression which is left upon my mind by the study of the *Critique of the pure Speculative Reason*. From this it will seem to follow that the great problems of religion have nothing to do with Kant, except, indeed, as an opponent. But the work which I have just been considering does but contain one half of the philosophical enterprise of Kant. There are within him two different men, the metaphysician and the moralist. The metaphysician, as I have just seen, is very near absolute scepticism; but the moralist is profoundly dogmatic, and leads the metaphysician back to certainty and to God. Were reason whole and entire in the speculative reason, man, as represented by

Kant, sceptical as a metaphysician, dogmatic as a moralist.

Kant, could never get beyond the circle of his own thoughts. He would languish there as within a narrow sphere, wrapt in a barren contemplation of ideas and concepts, which are the vain images of a world that can never be attained by his eyes.

The practical reason.

A priori elements.

The Kantian idea of duty.

But, side by side with the speculative reason, there is in us the practical reason also. The pure forms of the intuition, the concepts of the understanding, the ideas of the reason, do not exhaust the analysis of the human consciousness. It includes further other *a priori* elements, for instance, the two great concepts of duty and of liberty, upon which all our moral life depends. The man of the speculative reason is a purely intellectual being, having nothing to do but to think; but the true man is not pure intellect. He has activity and sensibility. He has needs, desires, and obligations. He aspires after happiness, perfection, and immortality. Thus, he finds again in the bosom of moral life the certainty which evaporated in his speculative researches. The soul, with its spirituality and immortality, God and Providence, had hitherto concealed themselves from all his efforts. Resting upon the idea of duty, he seizes with a powerful grasp the truths which before eluded him. The idea of duty is the *Cogito ergo sum* of Kant; it is the *minimum quid inconcussum*, invincible by doubt, which enables this new Descartes to consolidate all which he had shaken. Such is the general idea of the *Critique of the Practical Reason*; and it is formally asserted by Kant that this second work is not a wing added as an after-thought to an ill-conceived edifice by a short-sighted architect, but that jointly with the *Critique of the Speculative*

*Reason* it forms a regular, complete, and harmonious monument.<sup>1</sup>

How can the morality of Kant serve as the basis for a Theodicea? How is God, with liberty and the future life, one of the three postulates of the practical reason? The three postulates of the practical reason.

Kant sets out from the fundamental concept of the practical reason, that is to say, from the concept of duty. He sets about proving that this concept has an objective character, which is not possessed by any of the concepts of the speculative reason. He then maintains that the concept of duty communicates immediately its objectivity to a second concept, that of liberty, which is so closely linked with the first that they form together an inseparable whole. When this is established, Kant flatters himself that he has now made a step outside the circle of consciousness; for liberty, if we believe him, is not felt, it is a conclusion. The concepts of duty and of liberty, with that character of objectivity, which is peculiar to them, have therefore done that which the strongest metaphysical speculations could never have done. They have assured me of the existence of a being in himself, of a *noumenon*, for they have made me apprehend a free and moral being, obliged to do his duty and aspiring to the best employment of his liberty, that is to the sovereign good. But now the concept of the sovereign good, in which morality is summed up, is linked to two new concepts, in which religion is summed up, the concepts of God and of the future life. What follows from this? That the

<sup>1</sup> To say nothing of a third *Critique of the Judgment*, which yet further swells out and complicates the system of Kant.

moral concept communicates its objective virtue to the religious concepts; and in the same way God and the future life, which to the speculative reason were but ideas and possibilities, become indirectly for us certain realities.

We must take up the chain of this deduction, link by link, in order to lay our finger upon its weak points and upon its strong points. Kant begins by the concept of duty, and applying his analysis to it with a logical precision and a profundity of thought which have been justly admired, he establishes its existence and its peculiarities. There are duties, and every duty is absolute by its very essence. *Thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not steal*, are self-evident maxims; but is the obligation which they express peculiar to any time, to any place, to any individual, to any set of circumstances? By no means; these maxims are necessary and universal; to suppose a single exception to them is to destroy them. Setting out from this, Kant lays down as the criterion of morality the celebrated rule: "Always so act that the maxim of your will can be considered as a principle of universal legislation." He triumphantly refutes all philosophers who pretend to explain duty, whether by education, like Montaigne, or by civil constitution like Mandeville, or by happiness, like Epicurus, or by sentiment, like Hutcheson, or by perfection, like Wolf, after the Stoics, or, finally, by the divine will, like Crusius and other theologians and philosophers.

The criterion of morality.

The concept of duty is absolute. Kant also tries to give it an objective value.

It is demonstrated, then, that duty is an absolute principle; but is there any reason for granting an objective value to the concept, when we refuse to

admit it in reference to a host of other equally absolute concepts, such as those of the speculative reason? Here Kant exhausts, but exhausts in vain, all the resources of his subtle and inventive mind. He professes to distinguish the concept of duty from the notions of space, time, cause, substance, and the like. He does so partly on the ground that space and time have a reference to the objects of experience, while the concept of duty is entirely independent of them. He makes this distinction on the further ground that cause and substance, abstracted from the use which we make of them in the things of experience, have only a distant and hypothetical connection with the intelligible objects to which it is arbitrarily attempted to explain their application, while the concept of duty, immediately and absolutely regulating that which ought to be done, and which obliges every reasonable being, acquires, *ipso facto*, an incontestibly objective power, since a reasonable being cannot deny the objective value of the concept of duty without denying duty itself.

He endeavours to distinguish the concept of duty from those of time, space, &c.

The concept of duty, invested by Kant with this objective privilege, communicates it to many others, and first immediately to that of liberty. I am here touching upon one of Kant's most extraordinary paradoxes.

Objective character of the concept of liberty, according to Kant.

Whilst earnestly recognizing human liberty, he pretends that we have no consciousness of it. In his eyes, liberty is not a *fact*: it is a concept *a priori*. Taken in itself it is merely an ideal, and only becomes a reality by the *objectifying* power attributed to the concept of duty, so that we do not know immediately that we are free—we

The first postulate of the practical reason—the real existence of liberty—how arrived at by Kant.



We do not know immediately, but conclude that we are free.

This singular conclusion comes from Kant's metaphysical scepticism.

An *ex post facto* theory to save morality in the ruin of ontology.

do but conclude it. I can only explain this strange and artificial deduction by saying that Kant's absolute scepticism in metaphysics had fore-doomed him to empty refinements of analysis, and to all sorts of errors. In the *Critique of the Speculative Reason*, he wished to establish an alleged antinomy between the laws of nature and the laws of moral order. According to him, in the region of experience (which embraces the facts of the inner consciousness), all is submitted to an absolute fatality. Every phenomenon, inward or outward, is determined by anterior phenomena, so that there is no room for liberty; on the contrary, in the region of duty phenomena which are reasonable actions have it as their characteristic to be referred to a free cause. Here is a thesis on one side, an antithesis on the other, from which an antinomy results. Kant has imagined his theory of liberty to solve this and to save morality, threatened with its ruin in the ruin of ontology. He wishes liberty to be external to experience and even to consciousness, for the purpose of removing it from the sphere of operation of the law which, according to him, governs the world of facts. He therefore transports it to the region of ideal things, and flatters himself that he has thus solved the antinomy which he has chosen to assume. But if, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to idealise liberty was enough to preserve it, such a course is quite insufficient in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. To have a real morality and practical duties, Kant wants a real, not an ideal, abstract, and purely possible liberty. What does he do? He transforms the ideal into the real in a manner as ingenious and as illusive as that in

which just now he transformed the real into the ideal. We have not, indeed, if we trust to Kant, anything but a concept of our liberty, instead of a precise and immediate sentiment. But, thanks to the concept of duty and the marvellous objectifying faculty which he has presented it with, this possible and ideal is metamorphosed into a practical liberty. But, indeed, asks Kant, what would the concept of duty signify to a being deprived of liberty? You ought, *therefore* you can. If, as is self-evident, we have *obligations*, we are free to accomplish them; otherwise, we should only know desire and necessity; desire inclines, necessity constrains; duty alone *obliges*, because it alone implies liberty.

It is only by the aid of these complicated and laborious evasions that Kant arrives at the first postulate of the practical reason, the real existence of freedom. Imagining that he has rescued morality from scepticism, he tries to rescue religion also from it through morality.

If morality, as established by Kant, be true, with the law of duty as its principle, and liberty as its consequence, what is the end of man?

Religion attained through morality.

What is the chief end of man?

Kant asks if this end be virtue alone, fully self-sufficient virtue, as the Stoics have taught. He then examines the fundamental principle of this great school, and comparing it with the contrary principles of the Epicureans, he proves, with admirable strength and wisdom, that neither virtue nor happiness *separately* constitute the end of man, the chief good. Without denying the superiority of the Stoical principle, Kant proves that it is insufficient, and that it requires to be modified by the Epicurean principle, which, when

Neither self-sufficient virtue (as Stoics), nor happiness (as Epicureans teach.)

But their  
harmony.

in its turn reduced to itself, would be without moral authority as well as without moral dignity. The chief good is, therefore, neither virtue alone, nor happiness alone, but the harmony of virtue and happiness. But is this sovereign good, towards which reason directs that we should incessantly tend, realisable in the conditions of the sensible world? Kant demonstrates the contrary with great power.

This harmony impossible in our present condition.

1. Perfect virtue needs an illimitable career.

1. Undoubtedly, *virtue* is accessible to man in a certain degree, since it depends upon his will. But perfect virtue is holiness, and holiness is an ideal which the will cannot attain, though it can tend, and ought to tend, towards it unceasingly. Thus, then, of the two elements of the sovereign good, the first cannot be realised within the barriers of a limited existence. From this one of two results necessarily follows; either we must admit that this ideal is a deceptive chimera, which overthrows all moral order, or we must recognise after the present life an indefinite career for the perfecting of human morality.

2. Happiness impossible here; its connection with virtue independent of our will; and can only be established by the Divine will.

2. This second conclusion is further confirmed if we consider *happiness*, the second element of the chief good. Not only is the existence of happiness impossible in this world (which completes the proof of the future life), but the connection of happiness with virtue is completely independent of our will, and this connection can only be established, according to the absolute laws of justice, by a will superior to the universe, which in some sense grasps humanity and nature in its hands. It is thus that, inasmuch as the sovereign good which the practical reason leads us to conceive as the necessary object of our will,

supposes of itself, as Kant asserts, a *primitive sovereign good* from whence it can be derived, it becomes morally necessary to admit the existence of God.

The great sceptic is now in possession of an absolute existence. This is surprising enough in itself. But what is much more surprising is, that after having affirmed God, he attempts to determine His nature. Strange! The author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* proceeds to construct a rational theology after the type of Wolff. You have expended all your analytic subtilty and dialectical power in proving that metaphysics is impossible; and after giving it the finishing blow, you propose to us the solution of the highest metaphysical problem. Your systematic circumspection was such, that you were unwilling to affirm anything about the very object which is nearest to us—about the principle in us which incessantly thinks and acts by the light of consciousness. And yet now you flatter yourself with the thought that you have penetrated the great mystery of existence; that you have attained and described the Absolute. What has become of the fundamental idea of your philosophical reform—the idea which was to modify so profoundly the course of the human mind, and to change the aspect of all things in the philosophical, as the discovery of Copernicus had done in the physical order?

I cannot doubt that Kant, one of the most systematic thinkers in this world, had proposed to himself all these objections and many others. But when he had once resolved to save the principle of religious truths, when he had once entered upon the track of the *Critique of the*

Kant proceeds to determine the nature of God.

*Practical Reason*, I understand also that it was very difficult for him to refrain from going beyond the bare affirmation of God. Upon what grounds, according to Kant, have we the right to affirm that God exists. Because the sovereign good, which must necessarily be realised, can only be realised by supposing God. But if it be so, we have a method of determining the nature of God. God, though apprehended by us indirectly, is not therefore an enigmatical principle. We do not see directly what He is, but we know what He must be; for we know that He must have all the attributes, without which it would be impossible for Him to be what He is; that is to say, the principle which realises the sovereign good. But to realise the sovereign good, we must first know it. Therefore God is intelligent. It is not sufficient to know it, we must love and will it. Therefore God is good and great.

So speaks logic. But I leave Kant to speak for himself. "God," he says, "must be omniscient, that He may penetrate into our most secret intentions under all possible circumstances and in all times; omnipotent, to apportion to my conduct the consequences which it deserves: analogously, omnipresent, eternal," &c. And it is thus, adds Kant, that the moral law, by the help of the idea of the sovereign good, determines the notion of the Supreme Being—a result which could not be obtained by physics, or metaphysics, or by the whole speculative reason.

At the close of his *Critique of the Practical Reason* Kant makes incredible efforts to demonstrate that it is consistent with his *Critique of the*

*Speculative Reason*, and that He might doubt of God in the latter and affirm Him in the former, without any contradiction. The practical reason, he remarks, does not extend speculative knowledge. It merely makes us know as real that which speculative reason had conceived as problematical. Liberty, immortality, God, are not new objects for the speculative reason. The practical reason limits itself to assuring us of their objective reality, of which we were previously ignorant. In the case of liberty this takes place immediately. "You ought, therefore you are, free." Liberty is the *à priori* condition of the moral law. As for the two other great religious truths, immortality and God, their objective reality is linked with that of liberty, which is itself inseparable from the moral law, of which we have the immediate consciousness.

Kant vainly attempts to prove that his *Critique of the Practical Reason* is connected with his *Critique of the Speculative Reason*.

When the practical reason affirms God and Immortality, this is not a mere speculative need, a simple means of giving our knowledge a higher degree of unity and perfection. It is a legitimate need of admitting that without which the end which we should necessarily purpose to ourselves in our actions could not exist. Thus, then, the practical reason does not contradict, it confirms the speculative reason. There would be a contradiction between them, if the practical reason professed to extend the field of our theoretical speculation, and to give a transcendental use to our ideas. But it is not so. If the practical reason gives certain concepts a bearing which the speculative reason cannot attribute to them, that bearing is not speculative. Speculatively, God

and immortality remain things impenetrable to us. We only know with certainty that there is a God and a future life. The speculative reason had given us notice that there is something beyond the phenomenal. This something remains unknown to the practical reason, in this sense that practical reason cannot determine it speculatively, or at least that it adds nothing to the speculative concepts which we had. But these speculative concepts presented to us the ideal and absolute as simply possible. The practical reason gives them to us as certain.

Kant's proof that the concept of duty has a power of objectivity.

But the concepts of cause and substance stand just on the same footing as those of duty.

What must we think of these ingenious explanations? To say the truth, I think them perfectly hollow, and it seems to me that all Kant's attempts to give to the concept of duty that objective character which he withholds from the other concepts of reason, have completely failed. He asserts that the concept of duty has a power of objectivity which is peculiar to itself, inasmuch as it expresses that which should be done by every reasonable will, prescinding from the conditions of experience, and thus itself realizes its objects, since it always depends upon the will to remain faithful to duty. I answer that the concept of cause, and that of substance, are independent of sensible objects as well as the law of duty. Suppose, in fact, the universe annihilated—these concepts preserve their own value; for it remains true, that every effect implies a cause, and every attribute a substance. These are hollow concepts, says Kant. Granted. But what can be more unreal than the notion of duty, apart from beings endowed with will? Duty, urges Kant, not only

rules over the moral world, as the law of causality rules over the physical world, but *constitutes* it. This distinction is at once false and subtle. Pre-scinding from moral beings, whose existence beyond and externally to ourselves experience alone teaches us, duty is nothing more than an abstraction without reality. All the refinements and subtleties which have been imagined to create a difference here, only prove one thing, viz., that the sound sense and good conscience of Kant cannot be penned up within the system of abstractions and doubts, in which the fear of metaphysics has led him to imprison himself.

Let us, however, suppose that the concept of duty, such as Kant describes it, does in fact possess an objective value. I assert that it cannot communicate that objectivity, to the concepts of the future life and of God, nor even to the concept of liberty. Undoubtedly, the maxim of Kant—"You ought, therefore you can"—is most true and beautiful. And it is incontestable in itself that duty and freedom are inseparable. But I venture to say that this is true for every one but Kant. Practically, whoever interrogates himself impartially will easily perceive that as soon as reason makes a man distinguish good from evil, conscience teaches him that he is free to choose one or the other. Duty is that which is right in itself, conceived as obligatory for a free being. If you take from me the consciousness of my liberty, you also take from me the notion of duty, quite as certainly as if you took from me the idea of right and wrong. But it is the constant and systematic doctrine of Kant, that liberty does not

Granting the concept of duty to have an objective value, it cannot communicate its objectivity to the concepts of Liberty, Immortality, and God.



fall within consciousness. In his eyes, it is not a fact, it is a concept *a priori*. This doctrine is strange, I admit—contrary to the striking testimony of consciousness, I am convinced—but it is the doctrine of Kant in the *Critique of the Speculative Reason*, and he pretends to remain faithful to it in the *Critique of the Practical Reason*.

The great question of the personal application of the moral laws insoluble by Kant.

Let us suppose, with him, an imaginary man who has no consciousness of his liberty. I will admit for a moment that this man has the concept of duty. What will the result be? According to Kant, as duty supposes liberty, he who recognizes duty should conclude that he is free. Let us understand. Duty, so long as I know not whether I am free, is for me but a possible and abstract duty. This duty implies a free being. Granted; but a purely possible being, an abstract and hypothetical liberty. For instance, I say: "it is a duty for a free being not to hurt his fellow." But does this duty exist for me? If I am free, yes: If I am not, no. Suppose that in place of being a moral person, I were a pure spirit without wants and without passions, or again a mere animal submitted to instinct alone in all his acts, it is clear that the duty of not injuring would not exist for me. In this way, it follows that in the system of Kant there are none but conditional duties. Man in his system knows the laws of morality as he knows the laws of geometry, that is to say, as absolute laws, but which refer to other beings than he. It remains to know if he should apply them to himself. But this question of fact can only be resolved by his consciousness, and his consciousness, according to Kant, being mute upon

liberty, it follows that the question is insoluble for him.

And now, I grant for a moment all that Kant has vainly struggled to establish. Granting objectivity to the concept of Duty, granting that this objectivity is communicated to the concept of Liberty, and Morality saved from the shipwreck, I assert that Kant vainly tortures his intellect to draw a Theodicea from these concessions. In his system, God is only known to us on the ground of His being the necessary condition of the realisation of the sovereign good. But what can be weaker or narrower than such a base, and how could a firm and vigorous mind like that of Kant deceive itself upon this point?

Here is a philosopher who assigned to himself the mission of introducing into science a spirit of reserve and logical vigour hitherto unknown. Absolute affirmations upon the most familiar objects are suspected by him, from the moment he has reason to apprehend that man may be confounding the laws and the wants of his nature with the truth of things. And yet, in affirming the existence of the most mysterious Being, he is content with this reason, that man needs the affirmation, and that without it he could not comprehend the moral government of the universe. But who told you that this need of God, and this impossibility of explaining the moral world without Him, are not a result of the constitution of the human mind or even merely of its limits? Who can assure you that God is the only legitimate hypothesis, and that there are not a thousand

Weakness  
of Kant's  
Theodicea.

other explanations of the enigma which weighs upon our weakness?

The weak side of Kant's 'Theistic argument exaggerated by Fichte.

This is so evident that Kant's honesty has been unable to refuse to recognise it, in a remarkable passage of the *Critique of the Practical Reason*,<sup>1</sup> where he enquires whether the judgment which we pass upon the existence of God, as the necessary condition of the possibility of the sovereign good, has really an objective value. Has reason, he asks, the right of deciding that the harmony in which the sovereign good resides cannot possibly be derived from universal laws without the concurrence of an All-wise Cause who presides over them? It cannot; "and to say the truth, the impossibility which we find in conceiving the perfect harmony of happiness and morality as possible, without supposing a moral cause of the world, is *purely subjective*." To such an avowal it is superfluous to add anything. We can now easily understand how—even in the life-time of Kant,—when a man of genius among his disciples, Fichte, went over the whole system to give it more unity and logical cohesion, one of his first tasks was to rid it of this tottering *Theodicea* as of a useless appendix, and to substitute for the idea of God the Lawgiver (which to him seemed arbitrary and anthropomorphic), that of a moral order resulting from the nature of things, of a necessary and impersonal order, by which the legitimate harmony of happiness and virtue is eternally realised.


<sup>1</sup> Book II., ch. ii., § 8.











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